

Hawa

PITCH DECK

Title: Hawa
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Genres: Historical Drama / Mystery / Magical Realism
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Pitch Deck in Polish: Hawa

“They want us to cease to exist”

Logline

In 2022, an 11-year-old Holocaust victim girl who returns as a ghost to her hometown in Poland makes friends with a 12-year-old refugee boy who has fled the Russian-occupied territory of Ukraine. Together, they unearth the girl’s hidden family treasure as the echoes of history reverberate through time.

Synopsis

In the war-torn year of 2022, Olena and her young son Stepan nearly escape death as they ran off the Russian-occupied territory of Ukraine. They seek refuge in Tarnów, Poland, where Olena’s sister already resides with her daughter Yasia. The Przeworski family, who are their distant relatives, generously welcomes them into their home. Olena leaves Stepan with them and goes to Ukraine.

Przeworski’s teen children, (Pawel (13), Agnieszka (17)) make good company to Stepan (12) and Yasia (8).Hanging together, they explore Tarnów museums and heritage and come to the haunting memorial of the First Transport to Auschwitz . Their thinking matures as the horrible parallels of this war with WWII strike their eyes.

These events of 2022 cross-cut with 1940 when the first train to Auschwitz (the first group of more than 700 people the Nazis listed “unwanted”) was sent from Tarnów. The jewelry shop owner, Rafał Zieliński, his wife Elżbeta, his mother Cylia, and his daughter, Hawa are on the list. Anticipating they will be sent to the concentration camp

soon, Rafał asks his friend, Grzegorz, to help him hide all the jewelry from the shop. Hawa helps Rafał and Grzegorz hide the treasure in an almost inaccessible place in the basement of Grzegorz's house - only small Hawa could do the job.

The next day, the whole Rafał's family, together with the other captives, is taken to Tarnów railway station and sent to Auschwitz. Grzegorz is captured and put on the same train - he has been helping Resistance fighters and ex-soldiers of the Polish Army flee to Hungary and then to France, but his activity was exposed, and he got arrested. Everybody understands that their chances of returning home are very small, but Hawa somehow knows that she will come back to Tarnów.

"Why are they doing this to us?" - this question sounds in 1940, as well as in 2022, and the answer is strikingly the same: "They want us not to exist". While the methods the occupiers use are different, the lists of "unwanted persons" and the goals the enemy is after do not differ much.

In Tarnów, 2022, Paweł, Agnieszka, and Yasia show Stepan the telephone booth where the memorial visitors can listen to the stories of the people on the first Auschwitz train. These stories deeply impress Stepan. He feels that he has many things in common with these people. He comes to this booth repeatedly to hear more stories and one day…

One day, Hawa talks to Stepan over that phone!

Yes, she is a ghost who has contacted Stepan because he has shown lots of understanding and compassion - and now they begin to communicate. Hawa manifests herself to Stepan. Although their interaction never goes easy, they become friends indeed. After all, she is only an 11-year-old girl who needs friends and wants to share her secret.

Guided by Hawa's spectral presence, Stepan, Pawel, Agnieszka, and Yasia set out on a daring adventure to the abandoned house where the treasure lies hidden. The journey strengthens their bond as they confront the horrors of the past and the harsh realities of the present.

Unveiling the treasure to the world creates a sensation in the city, and the children's act of selflessness touches the hearts of many. The treasure is donated to support the needs of the Ukrainian Army and those affected by the ongoing Russian aggression.

As Olena comes to take Stepan back home, he can't shake the feeling that he will return to Tarnów one day, just as Hawa once promised her parents. The powerful connection he shared with the ghost of a young girl whose life was cut short during the darkest times in history leaves an indelible mark on his heart and fuels his determination to honor her memory. In a poignant and hopeful finale, Stepan gazes back at Tarnów, knowing that the bond he forged with Hawa and the profound lessons he learned will forever shape his journey.

“- Why are they doing this to us? - They want us to cease to exist.” These haunting words echo through time, weaving together the stories of two souls separated by decades but united by their shared humanity and the resilience to endure unimaginable challenges.

CREATIVE CONCEPT

What this film is about

This mash-genre drama-mystery feature film shows how 10-16-year-old kids perceive war through their adventures, experiences, and significant inner shifts - they grow to understand the world around them as the echoes of the past reverberate through time.

Mother takes her 12-year-old son Sptepan to Tarnow, Poland, fleeing the horrors of a modern-day Russian war against Ukraine. There the boy finds new friends, and together, they go through an amazing adventure, discovering the hidden agenda related to the German occupation of this city in 1940.

There Stepan meets Hawa - a ghost of an 11-year-old Holocaust victim girl who died in 1940 as she and her entire family were sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. The girl is “still here” in her hometown, waiting for someone genuinely understanding and compassionate to share her secret: the hidden treasure of her family’s gold in an old house's basement.

There are striking similarities of what Stepan and Hawa have experienced: invasion, occupation, oppression, genocide, and death threats. This makes the kids understand and feel each other’s pain - but still, they are only children who need friends to spend time together, and share secrets, and their unusual and unlikely bond is formed.

Hawa leads Stepan and his Polish peers through the adventure, the treasure is discovered, and Hawa is finally free - her waiting is over. However, the future of Stepan and his Polish friends is still uncertain as the war in Ukraine continues.

Why this story is important

In our world, there is a certain lack of understanding that the Russian war against Ukraine is not just a “conflict,” especially in light of WWII tragedies. These two wars, which are more than 80 years away from each other, do have many things in common: invasion, oppression, and genocide.

The scenes Hawa sees in Tarnow in 1940 resonate with what Stepan sees in 2022 on the occupied territory of Ukraine. This Stepan-Hawa storyline spotlights these agendas as they are seen through the kids' eyes in the most convincing and trustworthy way.

What has inspired

In Tarnow, there is a memorial for the victims of the First Trasport to Auschwitz. In this memorial, there is an old telephone booth where visitors can pick up the phone, press buttons, and listen to the audio recording of the victim's stories, carefully collected by the local history enthusiasts and recorded to keep the memory of Tarnow citizens who died in 1940 - Polish prisoners of war, resistance fighter, all those who the nazis considered "politically unreliable", and several local Jewish families.

Many Ukrainian refugees in Tarnow have visited this place. Their stories are also full of drama and tragedies.

In the film's story, Stepan often comes to that booth, listens to the records, and is deeply moved by what he hears until Hawa talks to him on that phone one day.

THE CHARACTERS

Stepan

Main lead character, 12, then 13 years old (2022-2023). Stepan is a Ukrainian boy from Zaporizhzhia who becomes a refugee when the Russian invasion forces him and his mother, Olena, to flee from the occupation in the Melitopol area.

At the movie's beginning, Stepan is a scared and traumatized young boy, trying to be brave in the face of the horrors of war and the constant missile attacks in Zaporizhzhia. However, living with the Przeworski family in Tarnów, Poland, offers him safety and a chance to form new friendships.

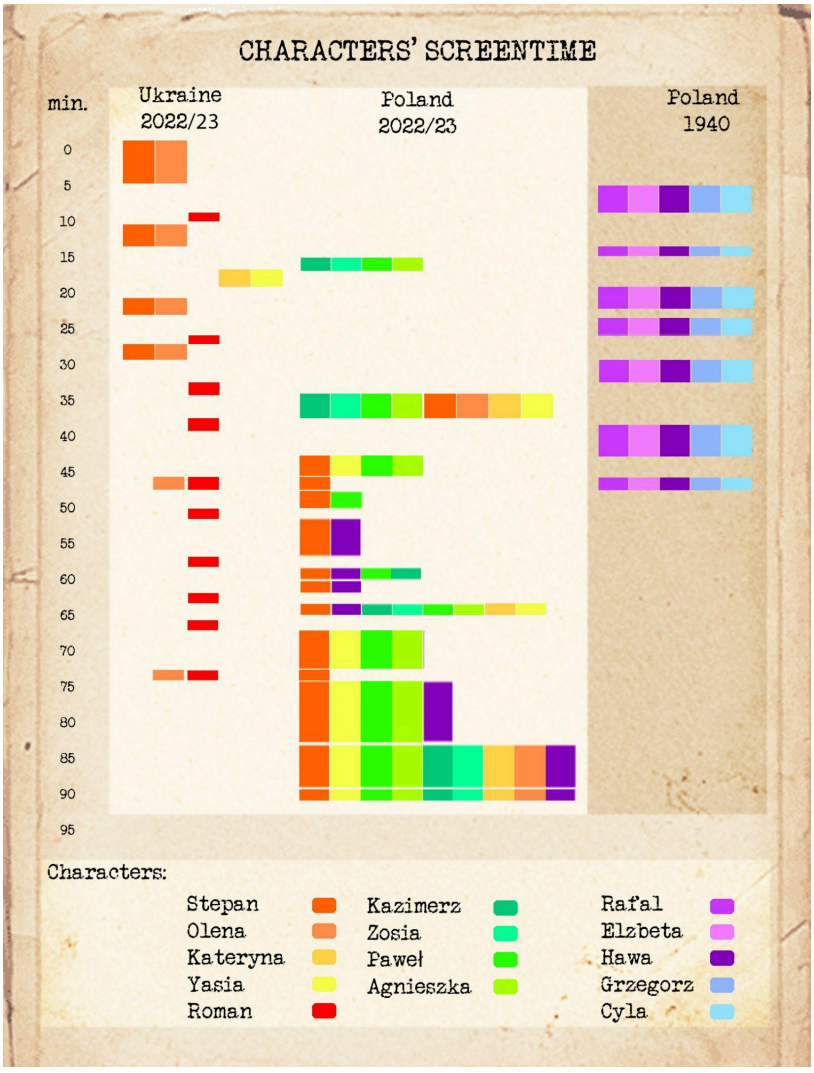
Stepan's encounters with the haunting similarities between the German occupation in 1940 and the Russian invasion in 2022 awaken his empathy and understanding. He realizes that the occupiers always have lists of people they want to oppress and eliminate.

Stepan's unique friendship with Hawa, the ghost of an 11-year-old girl who died in Auschwitz, plays a pivotal role in his emotional journey. This connection matures Stepan, leading to a transformation in his mindset. Stepan's perspective on life broadens as he develops compassion and empathy, and he finds solace in forming deep bonds with others. Throughout the film, Stepan's arc is emotionally loaded, reflecting the struggles and growth of a young boy shaped by the devastating impact of war. His experience with Hawa transcends time, leaving an everlasting impact on his life and furthering his understanding of the profound connections between the past and the present

Hawa

Secondary lead, an 11-year-old Polish-Jewish girl from Tarnów who perished in Auschwitz in 1940. Remarkably, she was certain of her return to Tarnów while others lost hope. As a ghost, she forms an unusual friendship with Stepan, valuing companionship and trust.

She gets 94 in 2023, but still, she is an 11-year-old girl who wants friendship - and chooses Stepan to be her friend. Hanging together, talking, and sharing secrets - that is what friends of their age would do. Hawa holds a secret: she knows the location of her family's hidden jewelry, entrusted to her father's friend, Grzegorz. With Stepan and his Polish friends' help, she retrieves the treasure, completing her mission. Although she vanishes, her presence lingers, leaving a profound connection with Stepan that transcends time. In the final scene, we can still see her, hinting that her friendship with Stepan is something bigger than just a story about the hidden treasure.



Screenplay writer’s drawings

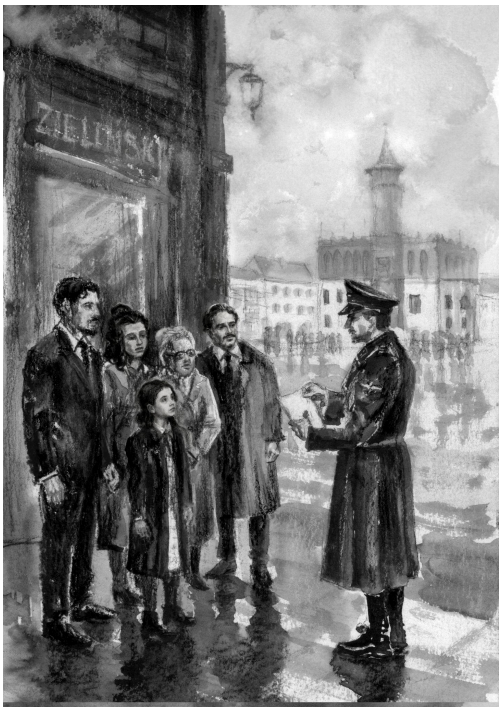








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