

Медовий місяць (“Honeymoon”)

“You support the human right to be alive”

How intimacy and terror collide during war time? We can find the answer to this question in *Honeymoon*, a romantic chamber thriller directed by Zhanna Ozirna.

Born in Horishny Plavni, Poltava region, Ukraine, Zhanna graduated in 2009 with a Master's in Journalism and TV arts from Kyiv International University. Early in her career, she worked at the Center for Contemporary Art and as an editor at the cultural outlet Korydor (2010-2012). She began making short films in 2014, exploring emotional intimacy, unconventional relationships, including *Alive and Undefeated* (2016), *Encounter* (2016), *Grace* (2017), *Bond* (2018) and the *Adult* (2019).

Even though she did not know at the time that this was going to be her debut film, the timing turned out to be right. The film was crafted with ingenuity and commitment. Under tight budget and wartime constraints, the filmmaker used virtual production, relied on location sound, and on an intimate setting to render a deeply personal story, completely based on actual events. Due to safety concerns, filming was done inside of a concrete studio space. She refused to film outside Ukraine despite the risk. Local war impacted the crew that she hired, and, like she said in an interview: “This is our story, it must be told by us”.

The entire film breathes through main characters Olya (Iryna Nirsha) and Taras (Roman Lutskyi). Their presence, silence and tension in their honeymoon ‘prison’ is taking us through a rollercoaster of stages and emotions. One moment they are lying in bed like lovers, the next day, they are strangers hiding from footsteps in a hallway. Nonverbal acting of theirs is so intense, by the means of looks and body language, they are saying way more than words. And they are not saying “I love you”, not even once, they show it in the way how they are holding each other, when the world on the outside erupts.

Olya represents memory, she is trying to preserve what it was. Taras represents survival, but doing so, he is losing his emotional depth. In the chaos of war, in a room where no one knows what tomorrow brings, love exists and it really whispers. It is not the kind that erases trauma, but it stays. Even when the world is collapsing. And that is hope, reminding us that we are still human, because even in horror we reach, and sometimes, that is enough.

Reflecting the invisible violence that many Ukrainians felt, even in silence, *Honeymoon* is not a war film, it is a story about fragile love. Two people learning that intimacy can be as terrifying as violence. But it shows that even in total silence, the connection is possible. And sometimes, surviving together is the bravest kind of love. If you believe in storytelling as a resistance, if you want to feel what it is like to be human in a moment of terror and tenderness, *Honeymoon* is a film you must experience.