

20 CRICKETS

original screenplay by Zha B.

The main characters:

Nyo (Nyoka), a non-binary person

Twins

Lizard-librarian

Cricket person 1 - Imposter syndrome

Cricket person 2 - ADHD

Cricket person 3 - PTSD

Secondary characters:

The musicians who tell the story

Homeless man

The coffee seller

Act 1

INTERIOR

SHOP

The seller makes butter in a jar. Intensely and slaps everything around the counter. Her face is oily. Sweat is dripping from her forehead. She is an elderly woman in an apron. Flies are flying around her. She looks at Nyo and smiles. Nyo is embarrassed.

(On the walls of the small shop hang the heads of dead animals. Old photographs and advertising banners. Sun-burned. We see how store shelves slowly start to shake. An earthquake. Barely noticeable)

The saleswoman (suddenly says):

"Did you know that there is a lot of butter in Ukraine?"

Nyo looks at the saleswoman thoughtfully and just as she is about to answer, someone calls out to her and she shouts back:

The saleswoman:

III O TAM? ("What is it?") and walks out of the frame.

Nyo sees the shelves and the floor vibrating more and more. Slowly approaches the window. They see a meteorite flying from the sky and burning. They turn her head excitedly to catch the saleswoman's eye.

But she turns around and doesn't notice anything and continues to put butter in the jar. We see an insect landing on the butter and she doesn't see it and pushes it into the butter. Classical music is playing in the background and the narrator says something barely audible about the life of insects.

The meteorite is approaching. Nyo backs away from the window.

Saleswoman:

"Nyo!"

And we see that instead of her head, the head of a dead deer from the walls.

Saleswoman:

"Catch them!"

We see Nyo's expression of fear and bewilderment.
They take their last breath in panic and...

Death. Black screen

Act 2

INTERIOR
Darkness

Nyo is in total darkness. It's all silent. We can only hear their excited breathing.

In the middle of the darkness is a blue pulsating light. Like a ball of rays. Barely glowing with blue bio-illumination light. It moves slowly. Like a living unknown organism.

The pleasant voice of a woman (as if in an airplane dispatcher:

"Congratulations! You have lived a demo version of your life as a human. In the next one, you will be a reptile. Choose the date of your rebirth and we wish you a pleasant reincarnation. Good luck!"

We see a tabloid with numbers appearing in the darkness and we see the date "02/24/2022". And we hear a voice:

"Excellent choice! This is your last day!"

Nyo:

"What the f..."

Black screen

Trigger explosion noises

something falling on a floor, butter fell out the delivery bag in their room)

Act 3

INTERIOR.

NYO'S BEDROOM

Nyo wakes up in their room. The sound of the alarm clock.

(shot from the ceiling)

*Body-mount shot (the camera is attached to Nyo's body and repeats all their movements).

Everything is floating around a bit. There is a Ukrainian flag on the wall and some photos of friends from home.

(The shot is a distorted reflection of Nayo in the tap). He washes his face and scrolls through their phone at the same time - there is news in one word on the whole screen: "Bad," "Aweful" "Fucking rusia" and so on. We see that now is the year 2024 somewhere.

Nayo dramatically wraps her arms around her head and moans.

Nyo:

"Aaaaaaaaah!"

Act 4

(Four people from the movie crew come into the bathroom, and take Nyo in their arms, face up. Nyo continues to moan dramatically as if nothing is happening. They bring Nyo on another movie scene that has been prepared and put Nyo up on a bicycle.

The crew dresses on them a square backpack for food, and a helmet, and puts feet on the pedals. We see Nyo delivering the food. A couple of quick shots with different people receiving the delivery.

Nyo shows an expression on a face that they don't like it very much.

Act 5

The camera turns to the left and shoots the other side of the backstage and we see three musicians - one playing banjo and singing, one playing spoons and dancing, the other sitting and playing banjo.

Nyo is distracted by random things (showing their ADHD)

*There will be a song that tells the tragic life of Nyo, something like:

"Life of Nyo, brought theeeem, into a Canada yeeeeh. But there's a crisis with jooobs. And even more so if you're not born in Canada... eh... Sorry for that, by the wayyy"

(slightly describing Nyo life/personality and so on)

Act 6

EXTERIOR/INTERIOR

ROAD / PET STORE

Nyo receives an order. We see a look of disbelief on their faces. They look at the screen of their phone in confusion.

We see them enter the room where they sell pet food and see the twins.

In the background, we see a calendar with all the dates "24.02.22". Nyo sees it and is confused a bit. But then interrupt.

Twin 1:

"Nyo! I'm so glad to see you here again!"

Twin 2 (stares at the first one with a look of condemnation on his face):

"What brings you here today?"

Nyo shows the screen of their phone screen. We see a look of disgust on his face because this is their first order of live food for the courtyard.

Twin 2:

"20 Crickets. Yeah, we have those. Wait a minute."

Twin 1:

"They feed them to snakes or frogs. Or lizards."

Nyo:

"Lizards?"

Twin 1:

"That's right. Lots of protein, cheaper than mice. Just imagine, a typical cow eats about 27 pounds of grass a day when you can grow a whole farm of crickets from the same amount of grass and make the same butter from just one cup of ground crickets!"

(he continues to talk, but it sounds like he's underwater)

Nyo looks at the vendors with great amazement (dramatic vertigo zooms in on their faces)

Nyo (smiling ironically):

"Well, then, this is my last day..."

Twin 2:

"Oh, congratulations! It must be very depressing, going back and forth every day with no purpose in life"

Nyo takes out a small DV video camera and films the crickets in the bag while they argue.

Twin 1:

"It's a great job, you move all day, a lot of cardio is very good for the body, and it's better than sitting here all day listening to your boring voice."

Twin 2:

"Shut up... I don't talk to you" (poses for Nyo next to the crickets)

Nyo:

"Well, in between deliveries, I used to film on streets..."

Twin 1:

"Why not anymore?"

Nyo:

"I don't know, I don't think I can contribute anymore"

.....

Twin 1:

"Oh, how did your interview go?"

Nyo:

"As you can see."

Twins look at each other. Nyo rolls their eyes and picks up the bag of crickets.

Nyo:

*"Guys, it's okay, and the delivery isn't that bad, fresh air, sometimes you get a good tip. There's something new every day. Like a cricket.
Seriously, it's just a job... it's temporary. Well, anyway, see you, bye!"*

walks away with an order in their hands.

Twin1:

"But you have over ten years of experience filming back home. I think it's enough to do it here..."

Twin 2

Yeah, and you made that just incredible, miraculous, life-changing, environmental documentary about dung beetles

Nayo:

"Yeah, I forgot about that shit.

But this is not Canadian experience, and paperwork is complicated. And my English is not so good..."

The twins look at each other.

Nayo walks backward out of the pet store.

Act 7

EXTERIOR\INTERIOR

LIBRARY

Parks at the address. It's a small library. Next to it is a sign that says "Books, books, books! Guess what we sell".

It's quiet inside. The strange saleswoman looks like an old lizard, her cracked old skin and sagging clothes. Her green ugly jacket and dull stare at Nyo make them feel uncomfortable.

Nyo:

"Food delivery... I mean. For someone reptilian-shaped!"

Inner monologue in the Ukrainian language

"Якого хуя? (What the fuck..)"

The librarian puts the book aside. We see the inscription

"Лесь Подерев'янський. Дохуя масла" (Les Podervyansky. Shitload of Butter)

She reaches out her old bony hand for the package, and then Nyo accidentally stumbles on a skateboard near the checkout counter that one of the visitors left behind and falls to the floor with the package in hand.

(Dramatic slow motion. We see the package tear open and the crickets fly in different directions and transform into a few people in cricket costumes. They run in different directions - one runs out the door and the other into the basement of the store).

Nyo:

"No, wait!"

Nyo picks up the bag with the crickets that have not yet jumped out. Counts them. Two are missing.

We see the lizard-saleswoman dialing a number on an old floppy disk phone and calling someone in frustration.

Lizard-saleswoman:

"Hello, your incompetent courier dropped my crickets! What do you mean you don't have anymore? You're a pet store! I need 20 of them!"

In Nyo, run into a little boy who has come to take his skateboard. He takes it in his hand and tells everyone:

Boy:

"I saw one over there!"

We see a dark entrance to the library's basement. There is a sign for the section "Insects and their Mental Disorders".

Lizard saleswoman (grabs Nyo's hand and pulls him close to her):

The lights go out. Musicians play mystical music in the background.

"If you do not bring me my crickets today, you will stay here with me until the end of your days. Just me and you, Nyoka! And the whole world will watch me eat you slowly."

We see her reptilian tail come out of nowhere and swipe Nyo's face.

Act 8

INTERIOR

BASEMENT OF THE LIBRARY

A sharp cut and we see Nyo standing at the bottom of the stairs, looking down at the basement with books.

Somewhere behind one of the library sections we hear rustling. One of the cricket is reading the books. He is quickly turning the pages. Nyo slowly approaches him.

Cricket-Person 1:

"I have more to learn. There's so much more to read... And tomorrow is the interview. They might postpone it. I don't know if I'm right for them. There is so much reading. I don't know why I agreed to all this."

Nyo:

"Hey. What's going on?"

Cricket-Person 1:

"I'm new here, you know, and I have so much to learn! I have a job interview and then there's you and your stupid delivery!"

Nyo:

"What kind of work?"

Cricket-Person 1:

"Being a cricket, of course! What else? I'm a cricket if you can't tell! I have to learn to be one, otherwise I don't know how to prove it to them..."

Nyo:

"To whom?"

Cricket-Person 1:

"All the other crickets in the office! That what interview is for! I have a job interview, and I have to be a cricket from 9 to 5 and eat grass. Your head is stupid. What if someone there who is better than me?"

(dramatic pause)

"What if someone out there who's chirping better than me?"

Nyo doesn't know what to say. They observe a Cricket Man going through more and more books at the floor. He hugs his legs and sobbing. Nyo slowly walks over and sits down next to him.

Cricket-Person 1:

"What if I forget how to eat grass? What if I can't poop grass anymore..."

Nyo sat next to them and spaced out for a bit in their thuds. They look at each other.

Nyo:

"Hey. You'll make it. For some reason, I believe in you. You are green. And... you eat grass well."

Cricket-Person 1 looks at Nyo with tears in his eyes. His lower lip trembles. He sniffles softly. He puts his head on Nyo's shoulder. And they hug. He is crying.

We see a flash of bright blue light between them. And Cricket-Person 1 puts his hand on his heart and looks at Nyo with gratitude. They have a look of joy and wonder on their faces.

Act 9

EXTERIOR

CAR

Nyo runs outside the library holding Cricket-Person 1. We see a car park and the two twins look out of the window.

Twin 2:

"Get in. Quick!"

Nyo, without hesitation, throws his backpack into the back seat pushes Cricket-Person 1 in, and jumps in after him. They drive off.

Radio

Breaking news from our local entomologist (of all people) an increased flux of cricket activity has been spotted all over our nickel belt region

no-one knows where they came from where they go or the games they play past midnight

the cricket police say to "use caution when approaching these pesky infestations and do NOT hesitate to use your bug spray.

Back to you Zha

Twin 1:

"This old reptile has been holding a grudge against us for a long time. There's a farm with crickets not far away, maybe they'll go there?"

Twin 2:

"And there's a big terrarium too I heard... but, what did she tell you?"

Nyo:

"That... she..."

We see Nyo notice something behind the glass

"Look, over there!"

We see Cricket-Person 2 running through the center of Sudbury. He stops near a large butter poster. A homeless person is lying next to it. Cricket-Person 2 runs into a coffee shop.

Act 10

INT,
middle of the street near the coffee shop

The three of them run out of the car. The drunken homeless man outside the coffee shop looks at the camera in shock.

Homeless:

"I may be a little drunk, but there was just a huge cricket in here."

We see the camera turn to the left and we see the whole film crew again. Everyone is nodding.

A producer with a cell phone from the 80s with a big antenna and stupid black glasses pulls a homeless man by the arm. He lets him hold a light reflector.

Homeless man:

"I gotch ya."

Act 11

Interior
A coffee shop.

The coffee seller looks tiredly at Cricket-Person 2 and hands him a coffee. He tries to hold it in a panic. His hands are shaking. He keeps adjusting his suit and looking around. He takes the cookies and coffee and sits down at the table.

Cricket-Person 2:

"Oh my God. Did you hear that sound? It was like an airplane crashing. How much sugar is in this coffee? I've heard that sugar is worse than drugs... and it spoils your tentacles. By the way, I dreamt that my tentacles fell out at night. And then a chases by a snake. Why the

hell would it be here? I heard that there are a lot of them in Africa. And in Swahili, they call them Nyoka snakes..."

Nyo sits down next to him and pushes his coffee away. We see the twins standing by the door in the background. They look at each other.

Cricket-Person 2:

"What if my antennas fall off? I won't be able to find friends and food then. Or my wings will no longer be as elastic as before. Oh God, no!!!"

(dramatic pause)

And I'm about to turn 30 years old, too. And I have to buy a house, and a car, and find a husband to marry, and maybe even get a ladybug. They say they're good at keeping the backyard free of aphids"

Nyo:

"Oh, my God, is that how I sound like?"

Inner voice

"Oh, my God, is that really how I look from the outside?"

Cricket-Person 2:

"What did you just say?"

*We will do it together, just count it to ten. Inhale...
jbjkjm*

Nyo:

Tells about his morning in the same manner. Chaotically about how they met the lizard and the crickets and the delivery and the tumultuous life of them. Telling about their fear of not get visa

Cricket looks at them confused

Cricket-Person 2:

What are you talking about?

Nyo looks at him.

Cricket-Person 2:

OH MY GOD IS THAT REALLY HOW I SOUND LIKE FROM THE OUTSIDE??!

Nyo:

You need to slow down. Take one thing at a time. First, breathe.

Nyo takes a big breath and pauses and exhales again. Cricket-Person 2 looks at them in surprise and slowly scratches the back of his head and closes his eyes. Entrance.

Nyo takes a big breath, pauses, and exhales again. Cricket2 looks at them in surprise and slowly scratches the back of his head and closes his eyes. Entrance. Counts 1.2.3.4.5.6.7

Cricket-Person 2:

"This is bullshit! Put that breath exercises into your ass!"

Nyo slowly pushes the coffee aside, away from him.

Nyo:

"What are you afraid of?"

Cricket-Person 2:

*"Death, dying. Becoming an ex-cricket, a late-cricket.
And that I won't find friends here and I don't really know how to do
my taxes and why the fuck do crickets pay them for the grass that
grows everywhere!"*

He starts to talk louder and louder, it is clear that his anxiety is very disturbing.

Nyo:

"I need your help!"

We see the cricket-person confused face

Nyo:

"Help me to find here 5 flat objects!"

Cricket-Person 2:

"Cup holder, paper, paint on a wall, coin..."

We can see from his expression that it's so fun for him and distractive but Cricket-Person 2 suddenly pushes the coffee off the table and falls to the floor.

There is a dramatic pause. They both watch the coffee spill. And then Cricket-Person 2 dramatically steps on a cardboard cup on the floor.

He said really out loud for all the coffeeshop

"AND PAPER CUP!"

The twins, who had just ordered coffee, looked at each other and simultaneously threw their coffee on the floor, smashing with their feet.

And then the random old man at the next table stood up and said:

"Fucking government!" - and throws his paper cup on the floor and step on it.

All the visitors in the background also throw something as well.

Nyo jumps up on the table and screams loudly, and Cricket-Person 2 joins them and screams together.

"FUCK IT"

The barista comes back from the kitchen with a joint in his hands and exhales while everyone going crazy at the coffeeshop:

"eghh, Monday"

He is blinded by something, a blue light, and sees Nyo and Cricket 2 shining.

Nyo is laughing. Cricket-Person 2 finally smiles too.
They ran away to the car.

Ont of the thing throwing good tips to the barista and runs away as well.

Act 12

Interior / Exterior.
CAR

They all get into the car. Nyo is in the middle. On either side are crickets. The twins drive everyone back to the library. Nyo and two crickets and the back seat of a small car.

Act 13

INT, LIBRARY

Everyone is inside at the checkout desk of a library. Behind it lizard librarian is combing her tail with a comb.

Twins:

"WE FOUND THEM!"

Nyo holds two human-crickets who hold their hands and walk to the counter.

The lizard librarian looks at everyone with a suspicious look.

Lizard Librarian:

(eats butter from her pocket)

"You forgot the last one."

Everyone looks at each other.

One of the Twins:

"Why are we doing it anyway? We have ninethen crickets and we can simply refund whole your order and forget about it..."

Before he finishes the phrase, the lizard librarian snaps her fingers and all freezing at the same spots where there were.

Nyo:

"That's impossible, let them go!"

Act 14

LIBRARY

All lights fade out

Nyo looks confused. The light around them fades. It's just the two of them in a dark room. The camera pans around them. Nayoka is unable to move, frozen in mid-air in front of the lizard.

Lizard Librarian:

"What do you mean? I haven't done anything... maybe it's their choice to not move. They dont wanna help you. Do not care! They don't want to have you around anymore, Nyoka"

We can see everyone standing still.

Nyo:

"Why are you doing this to me?"

Lizard Librarian:

"Because it's all mine! You will not hide from me in a new place. New life, new friends! It is all mine and you are belong to me."

We see how the lizard takes and draws a map of Ukraine in the air and there are all regions on it, almost all of which have crickets on needles. Only a couple of regions are still empty (Kyiv and Lviv, for example).

someone's hand on their shoulder.

Twin2

Are you ok?

We can see everyone looks at Nyo confused like nothing happened.

Act 15

A loud ambulance noise triggers Nyo and they see something outside the store and see people gathering near the bottom and looking up. We see Cricket-Person 3 standing on the edge of the house.

A quick cut. Everyone at the roof. Nyo walks quickly to the edge of the house where Cricket-Person 3 is. They turns to everyone.

Cricket-Person 3:

"I can't take it anymore. I can't sleep anymore. In my dreams, the world is always ending."

(Pause. Everyone is silent. They look at them worriedly)

"I can't do this anymore. I have nowhere to live. They destroyed everything. And I shouldn't even be here. I should be there with them. But I'm so scared. And I don't belong here. I am a stranger here. And no one understands"

Nyo:

"I do!"

Cricket-Person 3 holds their head with their hands and looks at Nyo with a question in her eyes.

Nyo:

"How could I not when I hear about. When you losing people you care. When all thats around - news about deth, lost and discription.

And in a way all of that happened to me. Wherever I am, I am not me because I lost my life. I lost the life I've had, all I've built over the years. My home, my flatmates, my family. The job I had, my

favorite bar where we would discuss art. My morning jogging path, mom's fresh bread, all routines, everything that I have become, all time and effort was suddenly gone. Just like that, you are told you can be killed at any given moment, and no one will care. And once you know that, you can never forget, even if you are in a safe place".

Comes closer to Cricket-Person 3

Nyo:

"So at the same time, i feel bad yet i cannot complain about it because this sacrifice is really small compared to what people in Ukraine have to face everyday"

Everyone looks at them very carefully.

Cricket-Person 3:

But what about you?

Nyo:

Me? I forgot what I like and who I am because it feels wrong to ask myself these questions. It feels wrong to focus on myself even for a little bit, or even worse, feel happy when russian bombs kill someone just like me everyday.

Cricket-Person 3:

You. Your safety, your joy.

Cricket person 3 are closes eyes.

We see Nyo standing on the same spot, on the roof, with their eyes closed. Tears up.

It's about me, it's not hurting anyone. Is it really hurting anyone?

Cricket-Person 3 is Nyo. Nyo is Cricket. They cry and inhales nervously:

"This is not real. It's not real. It's not real. Seems like it would be easier to be a reptile hunting for crickets"

Nyo:

"But choose to befriend them instead."

A shot of Nyo falling in the hands of all people (twins, crickets, crew, and so on..)

And we see everyone who was standing behind - the twins, the three crickets and Crew all together.

The shot from above. We see everyone hugging each other, some crying, some smiling, and Nyo exhaling.

Act 16

rooftop

We see the lizard librarian on the roof too. She looks at everyone. Silence.

Lizard librarian

"Give them to me. Give them all to meeee and I won't hurt you all."

We see how Nyo delivery bag is slightly open on the floor and melted butter coming out out there

Lizard stepping on it

and

Falling close to the edge of the roof and falls out.

Twin 2:

"Are we gave them permission to use our butter aqains lizard?"

Dramatic look at edge of rooftop

All:

"Sorrey"

Act 17

Nyo is riding his bike somewhere. Behind is a delivery backpack. They stop at a second-hand store. The twins meet them.

Twin 1:

"This is their best decision so far"

Twin 2:

"Well, maybe not the worst, for sure."

Twin 1:

"Are you agreeing with me now?"

Twin2:

"Oh shut up..."

Nyo hands over their bike and backpack to the second-hand shop. And exhales happily.

Twins:

"And then where to go? Any ideas?"

Nyo:

"I have one."

They look into the camera frame. Taking their small video DV camera

Nyo:

"Idea an idea for a film"

The musician's band playing on a banjo in the background.

CREDITS

(a scene on the side of the credits where the musicians

storytellers cleaning the cafe and playing banjo)

ACT 18

Scene after the credits

NYO'S ROOM

We see Nyo finally going to bed in his bed. He turns off the light.

Nyo:

"What a crazy day."

Nyo looks annoyed but happy to go asleep
Suddenly, a cricket chirps in the background.

Crick

Crick Crick

Crick Crick

THE END