

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's hand reaching out to touch a thin, dark branch. The person is wearing a dark blue, textured coat. The background is a blurred field of dry, brown grass and some green foliage, suggesting an outdoor setting. The lighting is soft and natural, creating a contemplative mood.

Losing Grace

Treatment Athena Mandis

Writer / Director Athena Mandis

Producers Liz Farahadi & Aradhna Tayal



STORY

Grace is forced to flee with her mother, Louise, from her abusive father, but their refuge is short lived when they are unwittingly tracked down, with dire consequences.

Their new remote home seems ideal – far away from everyone. Louise's fragile disposition relies heavily on Grace's support. When Grace makes a friend in Helen, for a fleeting moment she experiences the bliss of childhood. She feels safe and settled and shares with Helen the truth about her abusive father and her true identity. But when Louise finds out about Helen, Grace's newfound friendship comes to an abrupt end. Louise cannot risk anyone finding out the truth for fear that her estranged husband can track them down. Louise barricades Grace in the house when she has to leave. Helen concerned about her friend discovers this and begins to suspect that it might be that Louise is the problem. Her suspicions are confirmed when one evening she sees a man on the television making a heartfelt plea for his daughter's return. A photo of Grace fills the screen. Helen is shocked. She knows she has to take action.

The father accompanied by the police arrives to rescue Grace, unable to contain his triumph lets Louise know that he has won. Louise knows she has lost Grace forever.



The two girls lie in the field with overgrown grass,
basking in the afternoon sun.

The clouds dance over them.



The Film

Losing Grace is a gripping poetic thriller that keeps audiences guessing and leaves them with their hearts in their throats throughout its short format. The film explores the extremes a mother will go to keep her child safe, even if her actions shed doubt on her mental stability. In a world where women still find it hard to be heard, the film challenges audience's perceptions as the double twist at the end reveals.

TONE

The story unfolds slowly. It is not till the very end that the truth of Louise's situation is revealed. Through the tense ten minutes we move from suspecting something, to thinking the perpetrator is Louise and that Grace needs to be rescued, to where we should feel an uneasy relief when the father comes on the scene, and finally a feeling of loss and impotency when we discover the truth.





THEMES

Domestic abuse
Justice
Gaslighting
Escape
Refuge
Motherhood
Childhood
Safety





LOCATION

The setting of the film is important. It needs to be a place that one would consider as a place to escape to and be able to fall under the radar. The Isle of Man with its independent laws and its location is such a place. Visually it offers the remoteness the story demands. The Isle is steeped in mythology that is ripe for exploitation for the elevation of the genre.





CAST

Liz Farahadi is a British actor who will play Louise. The project is instigated by her to Address the lack of opportunities for female actors over a certain age.



CAST

Tabatha Howard is an up and coming act who is only 13 years old, and has the quality we are looking for Grace.



Grace and Louise stand on deck and look out across the mist. The land slowly reveals itself as they approach

VISUAL STYLE

Stylistically I want to work with music as a physical presence, a manifestation of Grace's internal world on one level and a choral witness on another. A theatrical troupe that found cinematic relevance in Benedikt Erlingsson's film *Woman At War* (2018). The camera adds to this idea of witness, by shifting between being a silent witness in the distance and subjective eye, creating tension and unease for the audience. This idea of foreboding so excellently achieved in Xavier Legrand's film *Custody* (2017). But the perspective in *Losing Grace* is Grace and not the mother. To create the heightened reality we are looking to use anamorphic lenses for that extra edge given when shooting on a long lens.





OUR DRIVE

For the last few years I have become aware of the dark reality surrounding “gas-lighting” in relationships that on the surface look perfect. When Liz approached me about doing a project together as a forerunner for a feature we have in development, we did not set out to make a film about domestic abuse. Our aim was to make a compelling and dynamic film to enable the feature film projects to get made.

The theme evolved through the development of the script, through its organic process of striving to make the script better. The work has already given voice to people and garnered support in away we couldn’t imagine. For this reason alone we feel compelled to do the work justice and make the best film we can.

The Team

The project began with actor **Liz Farahadi**. Twelve months ago she approached me with an idea, although very different, at the heart of it was a story about a mother and daughter. Liz, brought on Producer **Aradhna Tayal**, with a real vision to make impactful female-led narratives with a female crew to redress the balance. On the strength of the script we recruited DoP **Beatriz Delgado Mena** and Editor **Nse Asuquo**.



From top left: Athena Mandis, Liz Farahadi, Aradhna Tayal, Nse Asuquo & Beatriz Delgado Mena