

KRISTIN
SCOTT THOMAS
ELSA
ZYLBERSTEIN
I'VE LOVED YOU
SO LONG
A FILM BY
PHILIPPE CLAUDEL





Now you understand why we wished to give you the pressbook after the screening.
Hoping that the audience will be able to discover the film under the same conditions as yourselves...
without knowing Juliette's secret.

UGC presents

I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG

A film by
PHILIPPE CLAUDEL

Starring
KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS ELSA ZYLBERSTEIN

SERGE HAZANAVICIUS LAURENT GREVILL FRÉDÉRIC PIERROT LISE SÉGUR

Original screenplay by
PHILIPPE CLAUDEL

Music composed by
JEAN-LOUIS AUBERT

A film produced by
YVES MARMION

A German-French production
UGC YM - UGC IMAGES - FRANCE 3 CINEMA - INTEGRAL FILM

FRENCH RELEASE DATE: 19 MARCH 2008

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"TVE LOVED YOU SO LONG" is a film about the strength of women, their capacity to shine forth, reconstruct themselves and be reborn. A story about our secrets, about confinement, about the isolation we all share...."
Philippe Claudel

SYNOPSIS

For 15 years, Juliette has had no ties with her family who had rejected her. Although life once violently separated them, Léa, her younger sister, takes her into her home which she shares with her husband Luc, his father, and their little girls.

INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE CLAUDEL

Philippe Claudel, you've had great success with books and received many a prestigious literary prize. Why a first film after all these novels?

Whether they are born of words, film or paintings - I painted a great deal at a certain period in my life - images have always interested me. I love deepening our view of the world with them, illuminating it, questioning it through their intermediary, and bestowing on it a reflection. I've always been a film buff. When I was studying literature and history at the University of Nancy in the early 80s, we made many shorts. We were always behind or in front of the camera, screenwriters, cameramen, actors and film editors alike. I already was writing a lot at the time, but I also had a real desire to create and show images. Then the cinema came back into my life with Yves Angelo, whom I met in 1999, when "Meuse l'oubli", my first novel, was published. He asked me to

work with him. Our first collaboration, the screenplay for AT MY FINGERTIPS, became a film which he directed, which was released in 2002. Following that, I met producers. They ordered screenplays from me but proved unable to make them. Then came the great adventure of GREY SOULS: Yves wanted to make a film out of it. I wrote the screenplay, and he was nice enough to involve me in the project: scoutings, casting, readings with actors... He awoke in me a desire to have more control over a creation, until the very end. I was waiting for a deep desire and an important story to me to step up to direction. It's very complicated making a film, it requires so much energy, time and money, one can't undertake such a project half-cocked. It's far more exhausting than writing. For a novel, I write it wherever I want and stop whenever I want. But when the motion-picture machine starts up, it can't be stopped. It's necessary to have - and here I speak for myself - a subject which profoundly inhabits us, to be able to bear it all, so that the desire remains intact, flamboyant and vital. Which happily was the case with this story.

Did it seem obvious to you not to make a novel out of it?
Ah, but of course. There was a clear separation in my mind. When bits and snatches of a story come to me, I immediately

know if it's going to be for the cinema or a novel. I couldn't really to explain to you precisely why, but there wasn't the slightest hesitation. When producers sometimes ask me if I would accept to "novelise" the script of a film they weren't able to make, I answer no. I'd be incapable of it. And it would be of no interest whatsoever. But I make use my talents as a novelist: my desire was, as for my books, to make a film which can touch different audience categories. Some people will see in it the story of two sisters trying to become close once again, while others will be more interested in the theme of incarceration. Some will focus on the rebirth of a woman, while others will watch the life of a family confronted with the unspoken, dark secrets... One can have a simplified reading of it, or one far more intellectual. I've always loved books or films which are aimed at the greatest number, which aren't intended solely for a single audience. I didn't want to lock myself in a genre in order to be closer to the diversity of life, which has always counted for me. I want to film people in those nothings of existence which metamorphose into great joys, that faculty which human beings have of falling silent and hurting themselves, as well surmounting that which might destroy them, and doing so with sincerity and truth as their on-going guide.

What was your starting point? The story of these two sisters? Did the recurring themes such as confinement and rebirth come next? Or did everything occur at once?

This story allowed me to crystallise scattered elements, such as confinement or secrets, which I had already tried to explore in my texts. One of my novels "Quelques-uns des cent regrets", which appeared in 2000, already focused on a secret

between son and mother. I'm fascinated by the principle of hidden life, that other who isn't quite who we believe they are, or who hasn't done what we think they did. Next, the theme of confinement is close to my heart: I taught at a prison for eleven years. Then I wanted to write a story whose central characters were women. I haven't yet made it into a novel. I love women, I'm fascinated by their strength and capacity to stand upright, no matter what happens, and be reborn, support us and put up with us, the miserable men that we are. That has always struck me. It seems to me that men quickly subside, while women are something else. I imagined the story of these two sisters, Juliette and Léa, whom life separated for fifteen years before they meet anew. All this came together very rapidly. I quickly wrote an outline of the script in a notebook, then I left to travel in Lapland. Over there, in the winter, the nights are endless, while the day lasts barely two hours. That was a magic moment of writing. I returned in January with a screenplay which turned out to be virtually identical to the final shooting script. Everything was there, right in place, almost supernaturally. It was the very first time it's ever happened to me. And this script, I wouldn't have given it to anyone. It was for me and only me. It was me, my flesh. I visualised all the scenes. I already had very precise ideas in mind for the framing, lighting, sounds, performances, sets...

Did you think immediately of the actresses? Kristin Scott Thomas, for example?

No, not immediately. In any event not when writing. I first thought of Elsa to play Léa. I knew her a little in life, I wanted to do something with her. I could sense all that she could give. I've always loved that blend of joy and immense



fragility she gives off. She infinitely moves me. As for Kristin, she's a tremendous actress but who in French cinema has always appeared to me as underused, so I sent her the script.

She really loved it, and, most importantly, she had the courage and intelligence to throw herself into the role of Juliette, which wasn't totally obvious. The first time I met her, I told her that I'd like her to be less beautiful on screen. I know how easy it is to gradually fall apart in prison. Inmates gradually take on the colour of walls, both inside and out. The walls become their clothing, their skin, their souls. It's very rare to be able to retain one's strength, one's inner light and desires. It was vital to show this. I next took great care in composing the rest of the casting. I wanted actors who weren't worn out either by the cinema or by fame, yet who remained great talents and who could lend truth to the characters. It's a stage in the work that's absolutely fascinating, putting together the cast, sheer magic! A task made up of desire and miracles, hope and impossibilities, chance and choice.

Three actors who have the important roles in the film - like Laurent Grévill, Serge Hazanavicius or Frédéric Pierrot, aren't big stars either. So they're only all the more credible.

Laurent Grévill plays Michel. He's without a doubt the character closest to me in life. He taught in prison, just like me. He was once in love with a girl of whom he saw a kind of double in a painting hanging in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nancy. This last story belongs to me. It was important for me that Laurent didn't have the physical appearance of seducer. I wasn't going to put in front of Kristin an actor looking like

someone into whose arms she would obviously fall. I wanted someone who had a secret charm, someone who wasn't necessarily "handsome" at first sight, who could even be downright unpleasant, and who gradually bares himself, who becomes touching, and who reveals himself to be someone too has been an outcast, in the same way as Juliette. And so both of them, little by little begin to reconstruct something, without going too quickly for all that. The only tender gesture between them takes place at the very end, when she puts a hand on his shoulder as they come out of the museum. We see the birth of a complicity between the pair through the pooling of their experiences and ruptures. Laurent's face bears both the wounds and promises of existence.

He's also the only one of the entire bunch of friends to quickly guess Juliette's secret.

Because he was used to meeting women like her when he'd go to the prison. He belongs to that brotherhood of those men and women who have been destroyed. Lost souls recognise each other, I believe. In the same way, the character of Captain Fauré, played by Frédéric Pierrot, is likewise Juliette's double. Frédéric Pierrot is an actor who possesses great humanity. He's a beautiful person and an actor who gives off uncommon force. Just by seeing him every day at work on screen, all the girls in the post-production crew fell head over heels in love with him. Fauré, like Juliette, reveals a fractured humanity. He's without a doubt one of the characters who touches me most. Juliette is helped by all the characters. They draw her back to the side of life. They put back her on the side of light. They teach her all over again trust and the gestures of happiness. But Juliette doesn't do for Fauré what the others do for them. Their relationship raises the question of the good or bad we



can do someone, unintentionally, without knowing it, through a gesture we make, or a word we utter or not. Sometimes we realise this only years later. Juliette isn't guilty of what happens to Fauré, but she might feel responsible, not having known how to answer him at the right time. They are very close, one is like the double of the other. It's deeply moving...

Awkward?...

In part, yes, from the point of view of intimate feelings, yes, but not in his human relationship with Juliette. Unlike his role as policeman might give one to suppose, he never judges her. Others at the beginning don't dare to speak to Juliette or ask her questions. Furthermore some make hasty judgements about her, which is human too, in the end. As for Fauré, he behaves normally with Juliette, quite like with Little Lys, Léa's daughter, who asks her the very questions the others dare not. This child is in a sense their spokeswoman, without them daring to admit it. She has all the naturalness and spontaneity of childhood in her insatiable curiosity. Which makes her somewhat disturbing, moreover.

What about Luc, Elsa's husband, played by Serge Hazanavicius?

He reacts to Juliette as many people would. As I too might react, no doubt. If he appears at the beginning almost unpleasant, you have to put yourself in his shoes. His wife asks him to take into his apartment, their home, a sister-in-law he's never met and who's just spent 15 years in prison. Luc represents the way many people look upon those who've just come out of prison. A look that we can understand, but we must fight.

At the beginning, we don't know if he's obnoxious by nature or if it's just an attitude around Juliette.

With Luc, Léa and their children, I wanted to set up a kind of "happy family". A priori, everything's fine in this couple. They

seem happy enough, they have two adorable little girls, a pretty, comfortable house. Luc's father lives with them as well, an elderly mutist, but one who's ever smiling, ever reassuring, a kind of well-anchored rock on which the family rests. To all appearances, it's the ideal family. And then we gradually realise that that things aren't working quite as well as all that. And the unspoken resurfaces when Juliette moves into their home. A couple, Léa/Juliette, forms, yet to the detriment of the real couple. We understand that they hardly ever make love anymore. Léa thinks only of this sister whom life once snatched from her and who has now returned as if out of the blue. When she and her husband kiss romantically on the mouth in the street, we have the feeling that something has been reborn between them. Moreover, in the story, two couples, from the point of view of trust and harmony, are reborn in parallel: Luc and Léa, on the one hand, and the two sisters, on the other. Why is there only the appearance of happiness? Juliette's incarceration and the family taboos which accompanied her, have completely destroyed her younger sister, in her life as adolescent, then next in her life as woman, wife and mother. But nevertheless everything starts to move and change once again when Juliette resurfaces. Juliette evolves but, thanks to her, everybody around her evolves as well. Change takes place slowly. I couldn't film it in fast motion. Life is sometimes slow. It takes its time. The cinema in this case must espouse its metamorphosis.

Moreover, the film is constructed in light touches...

The story is voluntarily impressionistic. The screenplay was written precisely in this way. The editing was rather simple to do. It was just necessary to reduce a little, readjust, cut a bit here and there, and suppress certain scenes which in the end seemed somewhat redundant.

A job cut out for a novelist...

I write novels like filmmaker, but I write films like novelist.



Readers often tell me that my novels are highly visual. Here, it's just the opposite, I adapted novelistic techniques to the image. I wanted that rhythm. That particular composition with a little touch here, and a little one there. That particular advance in the story which proceeds more by juxtaposition than by linear progression. I wanted to remain on faces, and give the actors and actresses the time to express their character's inner self. The choice of framing and rhythm of editing was key as well. I'm fed up with toady's "pulsating" cinema, with its ultra rapid editing, bombarding us with images and cameras swirling about in every direction. I think it's important to learn over again waiting, patience, and even seeing.

Kristin Scott Thomas's face is impressive. She expresses so many things without a word. Yet, at the same time, she's secret, mysterious. Kristin Scott Thomas's face is impressive. She expresses so many things without a word. Yet, at the same time, she's secret, mysterious.

Kristin has great talent, and, at the same time, the role was written so that the character is thus. There's was a wonderful balance between her talent and the character she had to play. I took great pleasure as well in giving sometimes several work directions for one and the same scene: in that way, I recorded material varied in nuances and intentions, which I made use of next in the assembly room. I then had the possibility of editing very different performances for one and the same scene. Elsa is just as impressive. That awkwardness which she gives off, that false cheerfulness, that smiling face but which constantly threatens to crack under the onslaught of tears. Framing and camera mobility are equally modified in function of the evolution of the characters: Juliette's character, for example, is

forced first of all into tight frames, which shut up and imprison. Next I widened the angle as if she were returning to the world. At the outset and during a whole part of the film, the camera on Juliette is always fixed, insistent, while the camera on others is lighter, more mobile. What was important to me was equally to use - with pudeur and a form of silence on my part as politeness - the fact that my two actresses, for different reasons, felt without a doubt very close to characters they embodied. That's what struck me. Each possesses a secret closet whose keys and secrets only they hold. I didn't want to know them but hoped that they were going to cross this intimate land during the shoot, and draw from it the building blocks to construct their work.

You transformed them physically as well...

It was important to bring them to life, to make them true, simple, by showing all the years of incarceration tattooed on Juliette's face at the opening of the film. And by constructing the face and silhouette of Léa like those of a teenager who had stopped growing, who would have refused to do so. Both accepted these transformations, a work without make-up most of the time, naked.

Did you rework the screenplay to explain her British accent? Her sister doesn't have one.

Kristin asked me if her accent didn't bother me. I answered her that when Romy Schneider played in Sautet's films, that bothered no-one, neither Sautet, nor the audience, and most of the time, moreover, there was nothing in the story which actually justified her accent, or so it seems to me. I'd say on the contrary that Kristin's accent especially helped me rewrite one particular scene, that of the meeting with her mother, who's played by Claire Johnston, an Irish actress,



which takes place in a retirement home, and that precise moment, when her mother's memory returns, she flips from one language to the other. It's a scene which greatly moves me.

In this film, you explore all sorts of family ties. First and foremost, the complicity between sisters...

Above all, I try to answer one question: can bonds be recreated after such a long separation? Especially when they were so close and when that closeness between them no longer exists? How does one go about it? Can they succeed in speaking to each other? And if one has this desire, does the other truly share it? I wanted to make this intimate tie felt. Nothing can be as strong as the bond between two sisters, that life and circumstances have stretched, almost torn, or all the efforts made by the younger sister to recreate this bond, for if it is a question of her oldest sister's very survival, it's equally a question of her very life.

There are many beautiful scenes between them. I'm thinking of the one when they are putting on make-up to go to nightclub like two teenage girls who are the best of friends. And the one when Juliette reproaches her sister, almost in a cry, for having never thought of her all those years. But Léa will bring out her diary to prove to her just the opposite.

Generally speaking, I took immense pleasure in filming both Kristin and Elsa. I didn't fall in love with my actresses, but I think I did fall in love with what they gave each and every day. Bit to return to the scene you were talking about, I first made a wide shot then a tighter one on the both of them. But still I wasn't satisfied. I suddenly thought that it was that box full of diaries which I had to film, that box which is, in

a sense, a prison of time and memories. Next, Juliette's hand leafs through the diaries, we see the days pass by in fast motion, while in prison, these same days were unending. All those years behind her, O my God!... All those years behind us...

The audience discovers at the same time as them what their relationship is, as well as the fact that they were equally unhappy without each other.

The characters don't have much of a head start on the audience. Every spectator had to be next to them and not in front of a film, watching the scenes.

You also address the question of adoption, since the two girls, Clélis and Emélia, are both adopted children. Both come from Vietnam.

We have here of course the theme of secrets, present in more than one respect in the film, in this particular case rather the enigma of one's origins. And then a question which I wanted to ask: just what is a family? How does one build it? How do we become parents? And from the point of view of the children, just what are parents? There's also Léa's ambiguity as she declares at one moment not "to have wanted a child from her belly". All this obviously reflects the traumatism created in her by her sister's gesture. To play the two children, I voluntarily chose two little girls with a large difference in age to reflect that separating Juliette from Léa. Shooting Lise Ségur, the oldest, wasn't a problem, she felt very much at ease and completely natural, but Lys Rose, the youngest, gave us a real headache. Devilishly pretty certainly, but a little devil all the same, who often did just the opposite of what was asked of her... So it took tons of both patience and... candy!



A short parenthesis about their first names. They're always the same ones which return in your novels, as in this film, Clélis, Emélia...

My daughter had invented Emélia, when she was small, for one of her dolls and I've always loved this first name. There's an Emélia in "Monsieur Linh's Little Girl" another in "The Brodeck Report". And a Clélis in "Grey Souls". My wife and I hesitated between two first names for our daughter, and Clélis was one of them. It's a French first name that dates way back.

The mother of the two sisters has the Alzheimer's disease, Luc's father can't speak anymore, following a brain haemorrhage. Here, once again, did you wish to speak about confinement?

It obviously wasn't my intention to draft an exhaustive catalogue of confinements, but it's one of the themes that is of great concern to me in life, and which I attempted to take up with my various characters. The film breaks down this theme into various modes, and different shots, from the prison and its consequences, to old age and Alzheimer's disease, from the solitude of the divorcee with Captain Fauré, to confinement in the mourning of the character of the illustrious Michel, secrets we don't dare to reveal and in which we are walled up. Furthermore, ever since adolescence Léa has stopped growing, so that she's remained, in a way, cloistered in it.

This obsession of confinement stems, you say, from the fact that you know prisons from within...

I wouldn't have the pretension to assert that I know prisons well. Let's just say that for about ten years, I'd go several times a week to a prison to teach, and it deeply modified my being and my way of seeing the world and life. I had been a teacher in an excellent high school where I had no problems at all and enjoyed my work very much. But I also said to myself that I might go to places one doesn't often, if not never, visits, where I could more be of more use. At the same time, I taught school in hospitals for sick children. Later, I taught for four years in an institute for physically handicapped children - some of my former pupils in wheelchairs appear in one of the scenes in the film. I believe that it's of our duty to try to go into the ghettos, crack down their walls a little, then hope to include them completely within our humanity.

During the picture, we sense that you're attentive to even the minutest details, little realistic touches and anecdotes full of humour

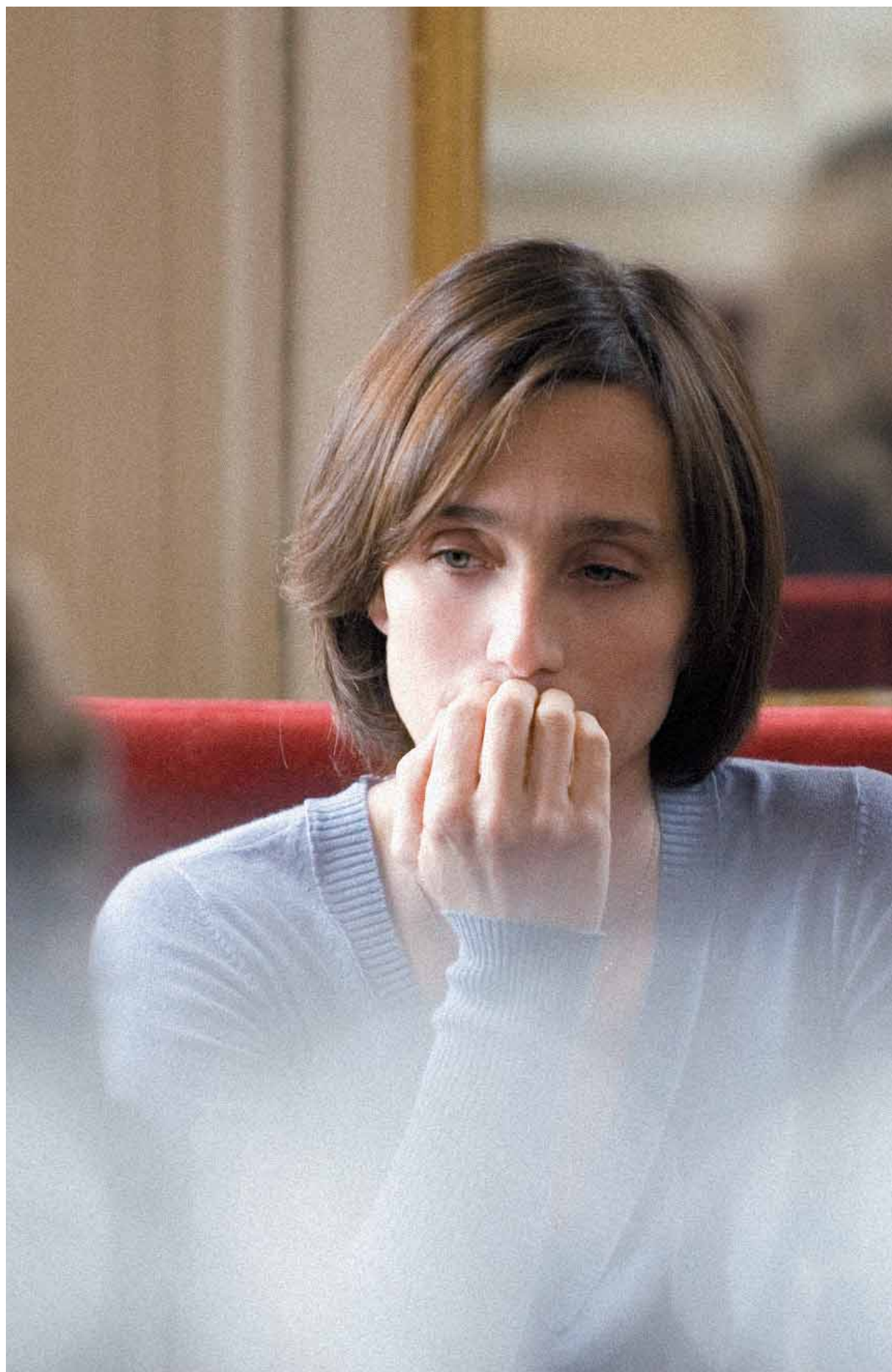
I was highly rigorous when it came to placing the story and characters, as well as the set elements, costumes, make-up, hairstyles, and even the way clothing is treated with their colours and materials. So, I asked Kristin to undergo a physical transformation. At the outset, she doesn't wear any make-up. So we focused in on her hair, accessories and every tiny detail which can might make her all the more credible. When at last she steps out of prison, she wears a coat which corresponds to her previous life, but it's far too big because she's probably lost a lot of weight, so for her, it's heavy, out-of-date... A true burden. She has a greyish complexion, her hair is colourless.



She constantly bites her nails. And Juliette smokes, a lot, while Kristin doesn't smoke at all in real life. I insisted on this point: I didn't want her to pretend to smoke. If the character smoked, she really had to smoke. I chose for her the very worst cigarettes, bitter and ageless, much just like her old coat. I wanted there to be in smoking a perceptible disgust, a perceptible addiction. I acted in the same way with Elsa. In real life, Elsa is a young woman who's always highly elegant, who loves the fashion which suits her extremely well. So I really wanted to break with this image and had her wear clothing that she never would have dreamed of wearing otherwise. I cut out for Jacqueline Bouchard, our wardrobe mistress, models found in the catalogues of department stores such as La Redoute, Cyrillus, H&M and Monoprix. I thus composed a kind of ideal wardrobe for the character. I see too many movies where the houses, even modest ones, are decorated by designers whose work far exceeds the level of life of those who are supposed to live in them, where any middle executive is dressed up in Prada. I said to Elsa: "Don't forget that Léa is a girl who wears flats". It's perhaps a detail, but that helps to come up with a look, a way of standing, of entering a character. I explained to her just what the salary was of a professor like Léa, as well as that of a researcher like Luc, her husband. Such people can't buy themselves immense wardrobes or pay a lot of money on clothing. Same for the other characters: I left nothing to chance. Fauré, who lives alone, wears shirts he must have bought ages ago, which he washes himself, even when it hits 90° C. He doesn't iron them. Still, Michel tries to maintain a certain elegance, but the suits he wears are within, not beyond, his means.

The house is a real house of family, full of books...

This story had to take place in the provinces, I couldn't have imagined or shooting it anywhere else. The fact that the shoot takes place almost entirely in Nancy was for me indispensable. The entire credibility of the project depends on it. For the house, once again, not one single detail of the set was left to chance. I put books I liked on the night tables and shelves. For the film pays tribute to books, and what they can bring to our lives. We can't make out the titles, but I still had the satisfaction of knowing they were there. It was critical for me, for that world which I wished to create. Luc's father and Juliette come together over their favourite books, like "Sylvie" by Nerval, that Juliette read and reread in prison. I was likewise highly attentive to the construction of the architectural lines in the film. Many lines are present, evoking prison



bars, a chain hangs from the ceiling, as in an engraving by Piranèse, the stairs, the movement in the house, like so many prison gangways...

Everybody might not see it, but I still know it's there. And then there are curves, rounded shapes, in the swimming pool scenes notably, where gentleness seems to return. For the colours, I went from hard grey to soft grey, from dark to light. At the beginning the atmospheres are Hitchcockian and cold, only to become softer and warmer later. I spoke a lot about it with Jérôme Alméras, my cinematographer. We had to move little by little towards life. The sound work, with Pierre Lenoir, then Stéphane Brunclair, Gérard Lamps, the mixer, and Armelle, his assistant, was also carried out in this same direction. Most of the perceptions are those of Juliette. All the elements had to testify to this and accompany the rebirth of the character. I was likewise especially attentive to bodies, the way they move and deploy themselves. How Juliette recovers her own, as she rehabilitates it by swimming in the pool, which she's now in the habit of going to with her sister. To find her body and show it once again, and feel sensation of water on her bare skin is one of the forms of resurrection and re-conquered freedom. I took immense pleasure in working the details and there were many, many of them.

Were you so concentrated on the set so that nothing escaped you?

Yes. I knew exactly what I wanted. I had to get it but without for all that overly rigid. The beauty of cinema comes from the pleasure of working as a team. Everything went very very smoothly. Nevertheless, the roles to be played were difficult, demanding enormous investment, tension, and concentration. Furthermore, I was equally demanding. I'd have endured anything to reach my goal, even if it had resulted in a dreadful shoot, which fortunately wasn't the case. There were a few moments more difficult than others - two months of shared life is long - but they were rare, very rare. But if I'm someone rather easy-going in life, I could have proved extremely terrible, I think, if I had sensed hesitations or obstacles. I knew that I can never redo this film, therefore every night, I wanted to end up with on screen precisely that which I had in mind. And I succeeded. There wasn't a single day when I said to myself: "Ah, today was a failure". That's what made me happy and helped me bear all the exhaustion, tension, stress and solitude of the director. Directors are very alone, in fact. Nobody other than yourself can really understand what you desire, what you do.

How did you direct the actresses?

We had two readings together. With Elsa, next, it was very tactile. I surrounded her, reassured her, took her in my arms, embraced her, a little like an older brother. I believe that we need to hug each other to understand one another and give each other strength, as well to pass on shivers, energies and nuances. With Kristin, it was more intellectual, but no less intense. I advised her to read certain books. On the set, at the start, I composed for her kind of haikus and would slip her little notes. I'd tell her: "Read this a little later, just before

you act". I expressed to her sensations. "A droplet which falls on a stone"... "Look at a great empty well"... "The skin of that man's hands"... Little phrases like that. Next, I stopped all the little notes, I didn't want to get into a kind of easy habit, and preferred by far speaking with her. Before the scenes to be shot, we reflected out loud about the way she was going to play this woman, what she was thinking about, etc. Kristin and Elsa brought, of course, things as well, many ideas and suggestions. Sometimes I found them interesting, sometimes not.



Did you shoot in chronology?

It was impossible, for budgetary reasons. Only the last scene was actually filmed at the end. I absolutely wanted from Kristin that violence and rupture, that visible emotion, those feelings that we succeed at last in expelling. Furthermore, I wanted to capture the shattered beauty and, at the same time, once again peaceful and thus sublime, of these two women. I designed the end shot precisely for that. The dynamic filming, that race in the stairs, that space between them on the gangway, the explosion, and finally, the return of calm. It was vital to capture it in just a few takes. So, shortly before the shoot, I drastically changed my filming style, so as to destabilise somewhat the actresses, and elevate to a maximum a tension which, in any event, was to be present in the scene. All this was carried to an ideal level. In the second part of the scene, I concentrated once again on faces, and no longer torn bodies, and the camera captured this peace which gradually returns to them through this moving reunion.

Tears flow for the first time...

Often, for the shoot, I held back Elsa's tears. Her character is a character of tears. We always sense them, ready to gush forth. She and I played with this. As for Kristin, she was never or almost to cry before the very end. Over the course of her life, her character reveals incredible strength. Her tears became fossils during her 15 years of incarceration. She only betrays her innermost pain at the very end, when trust, life and hope have at long last returned, when her heart has once again begun to beat. The patter of the rain on the windowpane, a metaphor for her tears, wasn't in the initial script. I was thinking of shooting in a house with a garden, and I wanted the image of the sun and rain. I had in mind a composition by Debussy, "Gardens in the Rain". But the house in which we shot didn't have a garden. We tried with special



effects to produce a "natural" rain, criss-crossed by sunbeams, but everything was against us that day. So, on beholding these drops pattering against the windowpanes, we said to ourselves that it would be very very beautiful.

Is a good atmosphere on a shoot synonymous with a good technical crew?

Yes. It was essential for me. I was lucky enough to work with people I liked or learned to like. As of the very preparation of the film. Yves Marmion and Brigitte Maccioni, the producers, gave me all their confidence and constantly supported the project and carried it forward. Their serenity and presence were for me highly reassuring. As for the film's technical crew, I knew some quite well beforehand, as for the others, I knew their talent and discovered their human qualities. Gill Robillard, the make-up artist, Patrick Girault the hair stylist, Jacqueline Bouchard, the wardrobe mistress, all followed me in my obsession for details. Jérôme Alméras, the cinematographer, is both a dear friend and precious accomplice. The sound engineer, Pierre Lenoir, is a great gentleman whose talent is only equalled by his discretion. The art director, Samuel Deshors, always perfectly understood just what I wanted: that great house, still lived in and which remains to this day a warm, comfortable, family home. Julien Zidi, the first assistant, a delicate and formidable role par excellence, did a tremendous job, just like all the others, from electrician to machinist to scriptgirl. The entire post-production crew was always there to the very last phase of the birth of the film. Virginia Bunting, the film editor, is a young woman who knows my world inside out and was able to accept all my manias and constant presence, as well as my desire for perfection. I wanted to leave nothing to chance and

not yield to habits, standards or fashions. What I equally liked was mixing generations among the crew: there was on this film both highly experienced professionals, and others who were only at the very beginning of their careers. The shoot equally served a training centre as I hired a dozen trainees, all students at University of Nancy's Film Department (IECA). We all had a wonderful, close time together and many a moment of laughter. I wanted a calm, serene set and got it..

What about the music? It gives rhythm to the film, it's highly important. Even the title, drawn from a child's song, known to all

I wanted offbeat pieces, without a piano, just an acoustic and electric guitar. Jean-Louis Aubert, who's an artist I've long admired, and a good friend over the past few years, composed a music imprinted with poetry, a kind of a mental music which accompanies the evolution of Juliette's character. He wasn't afraid of not succeeding, but I was certain that he would. He's a man who has both a child's sensitivity and rare human delicacy. He liked both the subject and characters. I asked him to pass by the shoot as well. He came with his guitar and impregnated himself with the atmosphere. He sang for me, between two takes, a song by Barbara, "Quand reviendras-tu?" It was a very magical, moving moment. I instantly knew that this would be the theme music for the end credits. For the rest of the film, Jean-Louis recorded one full hour of music, blending variations on the theme of "Alter ego", a song he wrote that I love, and I asked him to rework some original compositions and one unreleased song in particular that I knew "Je t'attends", having heard it sung in a studio. And then, he enjoyed himself with the lullaby "A la claire fontaine". The song is part of our heritage. Whenever we sing these words, "I've loved you for so long", everybody immediately thinks: "Never shall I forget you". In the end, Jean-Louis gave me his music just before the end of the shoot. I had given him the dailies, pre-edited fragments and atmospheres so that he could work on them in parallel on his side. During the entire summer, when I was editing the film, I often listened to what he had composed, during the day and sometimes even at night. There was a magnificent harmony between the music and my images. I was delighted.

Are you satisfied with the result? With your film?

I did, in the end and thanks to all those who worked with me, exactly I wanted to: telling a strong, sensitive story, with a well-reflected, rigorous and sober direction, one which doesn't bore the audience, while at the same time making them reflect. A sober story with its daily cycle of breathing, optimistic despite its tragic starting point, a sincere story, a story about life which leads the central characters back towards light, rebirth, love and understanding. I hope that this film will help the people who'll see it become closer to others, and accept them such as they are, without judging them, and help them when they need it most, that is to say, always. I hope that it's a film of love, imprinted with humanity, and whose emotion will long endure in the hearts of the audience when they at curtain's call finally take leave of lives of my characters to return to their own...



CAST

Kristin Scott Thomas	Juliette
Elsa Zylberstein	Léa
Serge Hazanavicius	Luc
Laurent Grevill	Michel
Frédéric Pierrot	Fauré
Lise Ségur	P'tit Lys
Jean-Claude Arnaud	Papy Paul
Mouss Zouheyri	Samir
Souad Mouchrik	Kaisha
Catherine Hosmalin	The teacher
Claire Jonhston	Juliette and Léa's Mother
Olivier Cruvellier	Gérard
Liliy-Rose	Emélia

CREW

Directed by	Philippe Claudel
Screenplay and dialogues by	Philippe Claudel
Executive producer	Yves Marmion
Producer	Sylvestre Guarino
Co-producer	Alfred Hürmer
Music	Jean-Louis Aubert
Cinematographer	Jérôme Alméras
Assistant director	Julien Zidi
Costumes	Jacqueline Bouchard
Sets	Samuel Deshors
Film Editor	Virginia Bunting
Sound Engineer	Pierre Lenoir,
	Stéphane Brunclair
Mixing	Gérard Lamps
	Armelle Mahé
Executive producer	Sylvestre Guarino
Postproduction manager	Abraham Goldbat
Scriptgirl	Lucie Truffaut
Stills photographer	Thierry Valletoux
Make-up artiste	Gill Robillard
Hairstylist	Patrick Girault
International sales	UGC International
Trailer	SoniaToutCourt
Artwork	The Rageman

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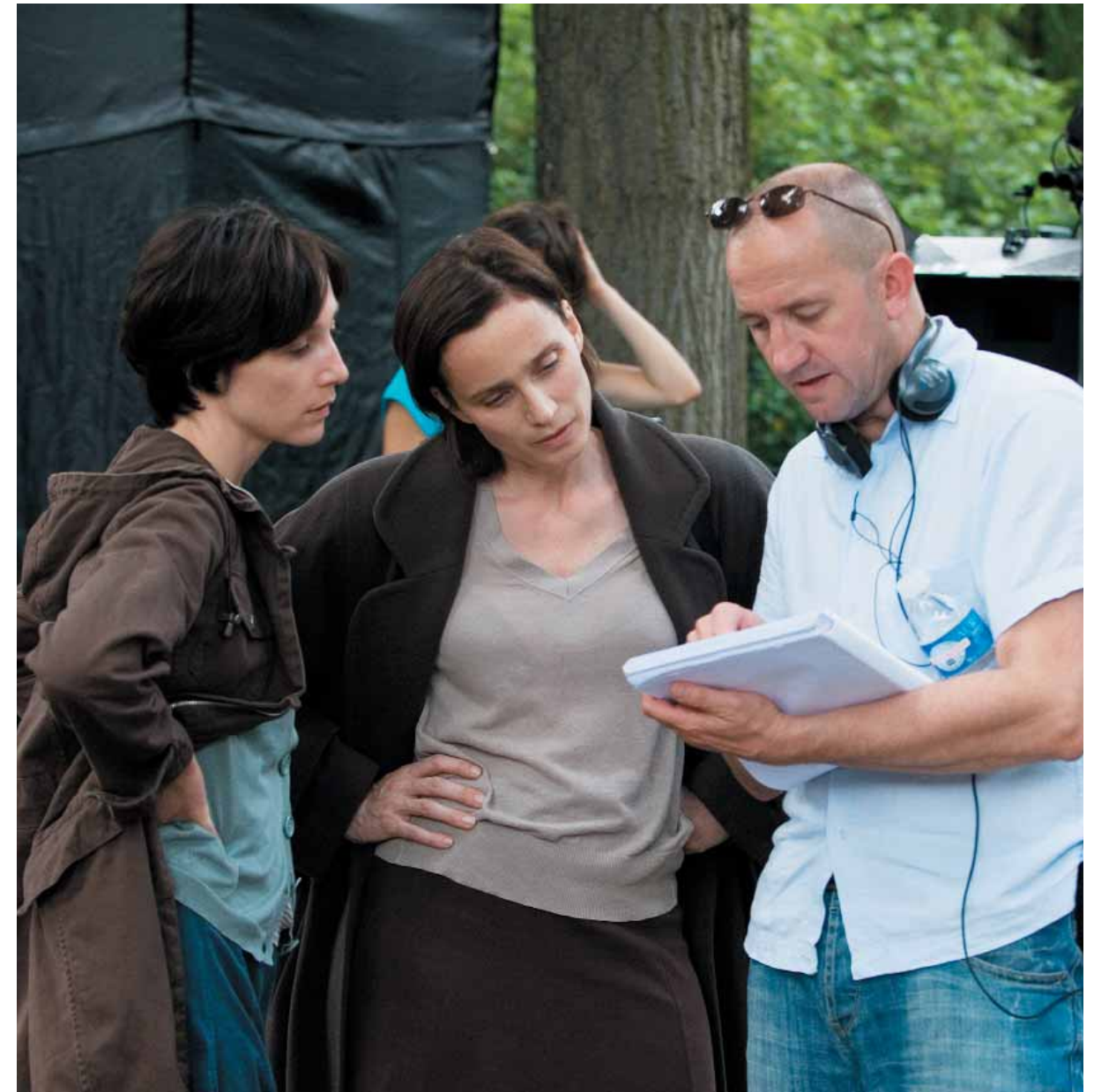
In co-production with France 3 Cinéma - UGC Images

In Association with Sofica UGC 1 and Sofica Soficinéma 4

With the cooperation of Canal + and TPS Star

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