



A SCIENTIST'S GUIDE TO LIVING AND DYING

**IN THIS HYBRID OF FICTION AND
REAL LIFE, AN ACTUAL PREGNANCY
IS FOLLOWED ON FILM OVER 9 MONTHS
WITHIN A FICTIONAL STORY.**



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LOGLINE

A young scientist in the midst of groundbreaking research is thrown into free-fall when she becomes pregnant with her dead husband's child and is suddenly confronted by the unknowable — absorbed into a realm of mystical female consciousness both terrifying and transcendent.



SUMMARY:

A young scientist on the precipice of a major scientific breakthrough is grieving the death of her husband. When she decides to become pregnant with his child she falls into a world that is wholly unpredictable and the reality of her impending motherhood consumes her with dread.

Early in her pregnancy Amy gets an opportunity to confront her fears in the flesh when she takes in two mysterious young boys. At first Amy and the boys clash strongly—but over time their relationship blossoms as the boys help Amy discover an impulsive, carefree way of life. But when Amy begins to suspect that the boys are not who they appear to be, things take a frightening turn—just as Amy's pregnancy nears its end.



Where REALITY and
FICTION meet,
an incredible story is born.



WRITER/DIRECTOR STATEMENT:

I was terrified of pregnancy-- so I decided I had to make a film. As I contemplated the unsettling idea of being transfigured, of relinquishing control, the idea for the project began to evolve. I started writing a screenplay about a young scientist who becomes pregnant, her journey unfolding over the nine months of her pregnancy.

This film strives to do something no film has done before: explore the journey a woman takes into motherhood from a philosophical, intellectual and spiritual point of view—but also from a completely visceral one. This is the real body of a woman in flux. This is the real mind of a woman grappling with the unknown. This is the real heart of a woman bursting, a mother for the first time.

-NITZAN MAGER



DIRECTOR'S BIOS

NITZAN MAGER

Nitzan Mager is a filmmaker and actor living in Brooklyn, NY. Her short film, **PERIOD PORTRAIT**, a comic and provocative look at women's reproductive cycles, won awards from the National Board of Review and New York Women in Film and Television, screened at IFP Filmweek's NextGenNYC series, as well as in film festivals across the country. As a performer, Nitzan has acted in theater and film, most recently in the LaMama dance-theater piece **GRAND ROUNDS** by director-choreographer, Tamar Rogoff. Nitzan has also produced and directed several short films, most recently a short doc on Gloria Steinem featuring an interview with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Nitzan is a member of the Filmmakehers, a women's film collective in NYC.



SHACHAR LANGLEV

Shachar Langlev is an award-winning filmmaker whose films have screened around the country at the Sundance Film Festival, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and numerous Oscar-qualifying film festivals. The documentary he shot, **Alive Inside**, won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2014 and was released in theaters nation-wide. Shachar also works extensively with musicians filming music videos (seen on MTV, VH1, BET) as well as live shows, and is a commercial director. He has directed and produced a series of high-profile documentary shorts on notable subjects including one on Elie Wiesel that included interviews with Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Colin Powell.



A Q&A WITH NITZAN MAGER

Where did the idea for the film come from?

Shachar and I were planning to have a baby, but I was actually very conflicted about it. I had a lot of fears around pregnancy, about becoming a mother.

I had no concept of what would happen. I knew everything was going to change, but I didn't know how. And I couldn't control it. In a word, I was terrified.

The way I process fear is by creating, writing. So, I said to Shachar—who is both my life partner and filmmaking partner—ok, let's have a baby—but I also want us to make a feature film. Let's make a fiction film about a pregnant woman, and film it in real-time during my pregnancy.

He thought that was a crazy idea, but he agreed. I mean, we had both worked on features before, but had never made a feature film ourselves. Or had a baby before. And here we were doing both at the same time.

We started working on ideas for the film. People who were very close to us were asking, when are you having a baby? And I said, when I have a script!

Why did you choose to set a story about a pregnancy in a psychological thriller?

A lot was coming up when I started working on the script. I realized that beyond having this fear of pregnancy and motherhood, there were actually much deeper fears around dying, aging, the fragility of life.

I wanted to get at those fears—the ones that sort of gnaw at the back of our brain constantly—but it's only in the middle of the night, in a panic, that we suddenly notice. The movie is like that—a slow-burning thriller where you just sense that everything could suddenly explode.

My character, Amy, is grieving her deceased husband when she decides to become pregnant with his baby. And in that moment, she opens up a pandora's box to this interplay between life and death, to the thin boundary between the two.

She meets two mysterious boys, who are a force of life and spontaneity, pulling her into their world. Suddenly her rigid, safe, logical way of life is disrupted. Her scientific research also begins to defy reason and categorization.

Ultimately the film is about Amy's struggle to reconcile the inevitability of death with a desire to live—that is the tension that is brought to life. And it expresses itself as this psychological mystery that is frightening at times—but also beautiful. There's a thin boundary between those two as well.

What was the overlap between reality and fiction in the film?

I had written the script by the time we got pregnant. It was still a draft in many ways, but I was pregnant and we had to start production. So what ultimately happened, which was very special and wonderful, is that the script evolved over the nine months of the pregnancy. We shot most of the film over that time, filming a few days each month.

As we were making the film I was meeting with the midwife, doing ultrasounds, dealing with all the changes that come with pregnancy. All of that informed the film because both stories—my real-life experience and the fictional story of the script—were unfolding at the same time.

We got into post-production and still did some additional filming after our baby was born. So now I was a mother raising a baby and finishing a film that began before I even became pregnant. That ultimately had the greatest impact on the tone of the film and how we chose to shape it. The film starts out from a place of fear and mystery, but by the end there's also a lot of beauty, which comes from the actual experience of motherhood.

Why do you think it is important to show the process of pregnancy and new motherhood on film?

I started this project very aware that there are not a lot of portrayals of pregnancy on film. And where they exist, they are often quite flat, one-dimensional versions the experience—mostly written by men, and directed by men.

It was important for me to create this nuanced, deeper story about the experience of pregnancy. And it is just one experience. There are millions of other stories to tell because as far as the “right of passage” narrative goes, this one is just so rich, so fascinating, so full of potential. So many directions you could take it. And sadly, it is a story that has not really been explored or told.

Where did the science element of the film come from?

My father is a scientist, a molecular biologist. I grew up in his lab. I would just hang out there, playing with petri dishes and pipettes and things. So science has always been hugely fascinating to me. Science is a very creative process. Just like art, it is very much about figuring out life's mysteries. And it can be very poetic. The research that is done in this film is a perfect example of that. I don't want to give too much away, so I will just say that it speaks to the way you are changed—on the cellular level—when you become a mother. It is based on research that is completely real—but also stunningly like something out of science-fiction. When I heard about it it was so clear—this needs to be a part of the film. It is just amazing to me, because it is real science—and it also reflects the exact themes I am grappling with. And biology is, by definition, the study of life.

What was it like, having your life partner also be your creative partner in this film?

Shachar and I had worked together before. We actually met on a film set. He had been commissioned to direct this music video by MTV. And I had just started in film school—I was a PA on the set.

After that, he shot and produced my thesis film, *Period Portrait*, which went on to win awards from NY Women in Film and Television and the National Board of Review. I helped write the script for his short film, *Folkswagon*. And we've done tons of other projects in between—commercial work, documentary work.

So, we had a lot of experience working together. That didn't mean it was easy. The circumstances were insane. Producing, directing—and for me acting—in a feature film... all while pregnant, and then with a new baby.

But I wouldn't have it any other way. It was an incredible experience. And we have it all documented—in a film! Also, Shachar and I are still together—so we did it, we made it to the other end. And we are already onto planning the next film, which says a lot.

How were you able to make the film with such a tight budget?

Originally we thought we would be able to get more funding together for the project. People were interested in the script and the story. But when they heard we would be filming over nine months while I was actually pregnant? Forget it.

It was too risky a venture. Filmmaking is inherently risky, and here we were fanning the fire. Ultimately we had a really tiny budget to work with, but what made it all possible was the way we shot the film over such a long period of time. It allowed us to shoot just a few days a month, mostly weekends. And this allowed us to call in a lot of favors from friends to crew our film without them having to give up on regular gigs.

It also meant that everything we needed—time, money, locations—was spread out over a long period of time. We had a lot of flexibility to work around everyone's needs.

It was pretty amazing having the crew there throughout the whole pregnancy—they became like family and they were all there for the baby-naming ceremony when our son was born! It really continued the life-meets-film theme that defined this project.

WRITER/DIRECTOR

Nitzan Mager

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Shachar Langlev

EDITING

Shari Berman
and Mark Demolar

SCORE

Quentin Chiapetta

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Roy Nowlin
and Shachar Langlev

CASTING

Erica Hart

CAST

Nitzan Mager	Amy
Kieran Patrick Campbell	Ari
Kivlighan DeMontebello	Caleb
Kathryn Kates	Ruth
Rowan Meyer	Nate
Emily Simoness	Joanne
Omer Barnea	Chris
Heather Rasche	IVF Nurse
Jay O. Sanders	Doctor



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