



JULIA AKKERMANS
JOHAN LEYSEN
EELCO SMITS
ANNIEK PHEIFER
SINEM KAVUS

A film by Floor Van Der Meulen

PINK MOON

TILL YOUR WISH DO US PART



GENRE
Drama

LENGTH
95'

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
The Netherlands, Slovenia

LANGUAGE
Dutch

PRODUCTION COMPANIES
Keplerfilm, Tramal Films,
Staragara, NTR

WORLD SALES
US - Urban Sales

FINANCIERS
The Creative Europe Programme
- MEDIA of the European Union,
Eurimages, Netherlands Film Fund,
Netherlands Film Production
Incentive, CoBO, Slovenian Film
Center

SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
Berlinale Script Station, Cinemart,
When East Meets West

AWARDS
EWA Network Development Prize

CAST

Julia Akkermans

Johan Leysen

Eelco Smits

Anniek Pheifer

Sinem Kavus

DIRECTOR
Floor van der Meulen

SCREENPLAY
Bastiaan Kroeger

PRODUCERS
Keplerfilm, Derk-Jan Warrink & Koji Nelissen

CO-PRODUCERS
Miha Černec, Jožko Rutar, Marina Blok

DOP
Emo Weemhoff

EDITOR
Mieneke Kramer

CASTING DIRECTOR
Marina Wijn

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Tim Balk

LINE PRODUCER
Pascalle Kleingeld

SOUND DESIGN
Vincent Sinceretti

COSTUME DESIGNER
Monica Petit

HAIR- AND MAKE-UP DESIGN
Trudy Buren

PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER
Oliver Pattinama

CREW





LOGLINE

When the 74-year-old father of a young woman unexpectedly announces he wants his life to come to an end, she is forced to face the absurdity of the situation.



SYNOPSIS

During a family dinner, Iris [29] receives the news from her father Jan [74] that he's had enough of life. In a few months – on or near his 75th birthday – he wants his life to come to an end. This absurd news is like a suckerpunch to the gut: Iris didn't see it coming at all. As far as she's concerned, Jan is an energetic father, a caring grandfather and an altogether healthy man living life to the full. He was supposed to be part of her life for at least ten years more. That was the idea. Her idea. That was how it would go. Until this day.

Iris soon finds that she seems to be the only family member who is having serious problems with Jan's death wish and who questions his decision. Her older brother Ivan and his partner Elizabeth seem to have accepted Jan's choice just like that; they are even going out of their way to facilitate his coming death and have it all as peaceful as possible. An App group is created, the parental home is put on the market, the household effects are labeled according to preference, divvied up and what remains is taken to the thrift store. The step-by-step plan of taking the deadly medicine need to be rehearsed, a farewell party organized and all of this is stipulated in a script, written to ensure that everything goes according to plan. Iris is left stupefied. Initially, she seems to join in with the rest of family as, apparently, this is how it is supposed to be, but deep down she is in shock and feels incredibly alone.

At the same time, Iris must face the fact that the world simply keeps on turning. Those closest to her are similarly at a loss when it comes to dealing with this upsetting news or how to comfort her; Iris ends up not knowing whom to bare her soul to. Her anger and incomprehension slowly take over her as she starts revolting. She becomes convinced that something needs to be done about this. She'll be damned if she remains on the sidelines, watching two months go by and not trying anything. When Iris has reached breaking point she decides to throw away the script and strong-arms him into answering the one question that matters to her: why? Without truly finding what she is looking for, she tries to find her own way of dealing with it and to be there for him, at the most crucial moment imaginable. ■



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For as long as I can remember I have had recurring nightmares. Always the same repertoire: one night it's my mother dying, the next night my father. I awake, dripping with sweat, only to realize after a few seconds that my parents are still alive. What if one of your parents does not die unexpectedly, but rather expresses the wish for it to be over? One day, completely out of the blue, your father tells you: I have had enough. What do you do? If this is his wish, should you respect it? My first reaction would be a purely egotistical one: I do not want to lose my father because I, myself, would feel lost. Am I not worth enough to him to keep on living?

Pink Moon brings two generations together: Iris [29] and Jan [74], in a story about the fear of losing a parent or loved one. Can a young generation, filled with a lust for life, understand or support an older generation's death wish? Iris must come to grips with her father's wish and, perhaps even more so, with her 'relationship' to life and the way she lives it. Confronted with death she, and thus the viewer, suddenly has to deal with all kinds of questions. Questions about self-determination, the malleability and meaning of life, loneliness and intimacy,

Faced with the finiteness of life and the people around us, our true nature may reveal itself: *la condition humaine*. This 'state of being', which never ceases to fascinate me, says something about what makes us humans tick and how we are shaped by our Zeitgeist. We follow Iris on her search against the backdrop of a specific society, one that places high value on man's ability to shape life and tuck away death behind closed doors out of the eyes of society. It's an age whose spirit I'm inextricably bound to, and one that starts to worry me more and more. It's not a pleasant place to grow old in; old age is seen as a burden, as opposed to something that comes with wisdom. A self-chosen death suddenly seems like a solution: a way not to become a burden to oneself or others.

The debate about a complete life and self-determination rages. Foundations, cooperation and 'end of life' clinics pop up like mushrooms everywhere, advertising assistance with a good death. Being able to determine when we die seems to be the ultimate form of control nowadays. But if we're not careful we avoid the painful questions involved; do we still dare to face those together? At first, I considered Jan strong - someone willing and able to make his own decisions. However, as research and script development continued, I began to doubt our modern social system. I like to consider myself progressive and liberal, and am of the opinion that people should be able to determine how and when they die. I realized more and more that maybe this isn't about the freedom to choose. Iris too must answer this



question about autonomy. If someone really doesn't want to go on anymore, who are we to stand in his way – even when this someone is your own beloved father?

Mankind moves me, in all its facets, in its attempts to protect itself from pain, in our sensitivities and the shield we put up. Iris and Jan are two people who express their sincere love for each other in awkward ways, just like the rest of us try to care for our loved ones. With *Pink Moon* I hope to have delivered an incisive and urgent debut. A film that shows my perception of the world and that deals with my biggest fears. ■

INTERVIEW WITH

Floor van der Meulen, *director*

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THEME FOR YOU, HOW DID IT EVOLVE?

'For me the starting point was a father-daughter relationship. You have a whole life together, but how well do you know the other - really? That is something that fascinates me, perhaps more so because my father is quite a mysterious man to me. During conversations with screenwriter Bastiaan Kroeger a new layer was added to the film: what if your father or someone else dear to you, tells you these x years of life have been enough? All the time you thought you still had together – now he has determined it will soon be over.

So the whole issue of life and death came into play. One of my own fears - a universal one, is losing your parents. That fear grows as one grows older. After reaching thirty the realisation dawned: we won't have each other for always. Suddenly you not only see your father, but also an old man. It triggers reflection: what do I want with my life, what do I want with him?'

WHAT IS TYPICAL DUTCH ABOUT THIS FILM?

'The pragmatic way in which death by choice is presented. Jan has decided: "This is it for me, over and out, it's been good." The fact that this should simply be accepted and respected is very Dutch right there. Especially his son Ivan and Ivan's wife Elisabeth's reaction. "If that is your wish, then we will help you fulfil it."

They put together a script, a play by play working up to the last day of their father's life; that too is very Dutch. Creating a manual, detailing every step, everything to stay clear of emotions. While I believe that at the same time this is a general coping mechanism - we are all very sensitive beings.'

WHAT WAS THE BIG EXPERIMENT IN THIS FILM FOR YOU AS A DIRECTOR?

'We made a choice to have a small number of scenes, long scenes, and lot of dialogue. Iris is a main character who likes to speak her mind. As a documentary director I'm used to observing.



But in fiction I'm trying to put something on screen which feels true. One of the ways to do that, for me, is to stay with one shot as long as possible, to be precious about cuts when you are in the moment with people. You might also say it's quite angular. In the Netherlands, well - in the entire world, actually, we champion our ability to shape life the way we want it. And we are very much concerned with how to make our lives longer, and looking away when it comes to pain and mortality. As a filmmaker you have the chance to make the viewer confront the discomfort of approaching death. And all the absurdity that comes with that.'



HOW DOES THIS ABSURDITY SHOW ITSELF?

'For instance when Ivan and Iris go around the house selecting the things they wish to keep from their father. That you actually go out to buy stickers, the person is still alive and you start divvying up and labelling his things right in front of him. That is rather painful and ludicrous, to hear your brother say he wants certain lamps and to then think: "Then I want those too." At a certain point they are rehearsing their father's death, with him present. That is also quite surreal: "I need more yoghurt to practice." And then you see them checking the expiration date of the yoghurt. We can really lose ourselves in details.'

AND THE EXPIRATION DATE OF LIFE?

'For the film, I obviously raised our dilemma's stakes a little bit - Jan is still in good health and intends to take himself out of the game before deterioration gets to him. Most people will prefer to wait until they're a long way down the scale of decline. But in the film Jan says: "Rather too soon than too late."

But we do live in a society where you're basically done once you're a pensioner. If I look at my mother-in-law from Surinam and her culture, I see another attitude to life. The elderly are at the centre of society, they are rather associated with respect and wisdom, and have an important role to play.'

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT IRIS?

'Iris is, like me, a thirty-something who hasn't figured everything out yet. Someone very focused on herself as well. The news about her father blindsides her, this isn't how she envisioned her future at all. So at first she rather forcefully pushes back. Objects like mad, because she is very impulsive and wears her heart on her sleeve. What I find very beautiful, someone unafraid to enter into a confrontation. Someone who wants to show her feelings and is trying to deal with them.

She still possesses so much vitality she can hardly imagine someone else might lack this. That is the reason for her relentless search for something to rekindle that fire in her father.

In that respect Iris is my hero, because she at least tries.' ■



INTERVIEW WITH

Bastiaan Kroeger, screenwriter

HOW DID YOU GET A HANDLE ON THE FILM'S THEME?

'Mine and Floor Van der Meulen's common denominator soon became apparent - we wanted to write something with an intergenerational conflict, specifically one between parent and child. We wanted to supercharge that relationship through the theme of a 'completed life'. A last chance to get to know each other better with a real deadline on the horizon. I thought it important to show nothing was really wrong with the father. That would make the desire to end his life more easy to explain and accept, whereas this desire should be more poignant. It was my hope that because of these rigid choices the story would hit the audience harder, be grimmer, and wouldn't be over before the film itself was finished; that the feeling of discomfort they've witnessed would simmer with the viewers, and might in some cases lead to an impromptu visit to a real-life parent. Quite early on in the development of the project, this became like a setting stone, something to never go back on.

What it all comes down to is self-determination, and how to deal with that. I believe more and more people are confronted with this in the Netherlands. The closer we looked at it during our research, the more we discovered that behind a lot of euthanasia requests a deep sense of loneliness was hidden, that is seldom discussed. The deadly medication as an instant solution could therefore be seen as a method that leaves essential questions unanswered and could be called tricky. When they implement an age restriction for instance, this might lead to people over 75 feeling dispensable. That way legislation and supply could increase demand instead of the other way around. Which makes it a very interesting ethical dilemma.'

IS THIS SOMETHING TYPICALLY DUTCH?

'I don't think there is any other country where this would pick up steam as quickly as it did here; it's already up for a vote in the senate. So yes, I guess it is. One of our goals with this film is to highlight Holland's typically pragmatic way of going about things. We start with a solution and a protocol instead of first asking some very basic and essential questions. This is



reflected in the thinking process and actions of Jan's son Ivan. He puts together a well-oiled script so that everything will proceed smoothly, without ever sitting down and having a discussion with his father.'

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF JAN?

'There are people who, at a certain stage, look at life through reverse binoculars. So that everything is far away. Everything, everyone is figuratively at a large distance, you can no longer get closer, and a lot of what one does feels like going through the motions, routine. That's what I tried to touch on with Jan. Iris becomes part of his daily routines because she moves back in with him. That way she experiences how life -right before the end- can still be quite erratic and paradoxical. There can still be unexpected buys, like a pedometer or this modern fitness apparatus he has. You wouldn't necessarily be waiting around, slumped on the couch. And we thought things like these were beautiful aspects of the story as well.

As we were writing Jan, we didn't immediately have a sense of the kind of man he is. Could he have roots in modern art? Is this all some sort of elaborate performance piece? Is he someone who is not afraid to express his personality this way? Or does he keep very much to himself, a loner, the type who doesn't waste words, who has already decided on his own, has already figuratively checked out. Quietly. Without letting anyone else on it. In the end that's what we went with. He belongs to a generation in which men were not encouraged to talk about their feelings, being emotional equalled being weak, and crying was a sin. He weaned himself off life by himself.



Through Floor I heard that at a certain point Johan Leysen became very angry with the character he was portraying, that he thought he was a real asshole. And I understand that, and the sentiment is valid. But the longer I spent with Jan during the writing process, the more I came to appreciate the strength of his conviction. Not once does he question his own decision. There is no longer any doubt in his mind and only then does he share his plans with his children. And somehow I can deal with it better this way. Because he leaves no room for false hope, a temporary reprieve, or the illusion that anyone could change his mind even in the slightest. It's nobody's fault. This is something deep within him. It is what it is.'

WHAT WAS DIFFERENT TO THE WRITING OF YOUR OTHER SCRIPTS?

'Jan's death wish has crystallized to such an extent, it can hardly be expressed in language. It's encapsulated. So a straightforward scene in which he clearly and politely explains it all would not fit. So no cathartic climax up on the Slovenian heights which wraps it all up emotionally for the audience, helping them to make peace with it. The failing attempts suit the dilemma well. He just can't get it across, make himself understood, and exactly that is what's painful for both parties. Meanwhile, life goes on, inexorably. So I thought it important to show that Iris also has a day job, takes time out to be a good aunt, functions while riding this tumultuous rollercoaster. That there is still fun to be had, that there is still love, and especially some breathing space. Another thing unique to the writing of this script, was the realization early on in the process that alternating emotionally heavy scenes with more tragi-comic moments would be essential to have the viewer stay open, receptive. Because we are working towards a death that has been announced in advance, it was key to make it a lively and unruly script.

Of course you sometimes read about complete scenes originating quite early in the process, almost on their own accord. I experienced that myself for the first time in my career, with a couple of Iris' scenes. Even before I fully got a grip on her, a few scenes popped up, including all the dialogue. Like the one where she discovers her own things in the thrift store, or the one where yet another interested buyer comes to the house; those were really fully formed ready-mades, which in turn influenced and dictated the tone and characters of the film. While I was still finding my way. About five of those scenes which arrived that early in the writing were left virtually unchanged. Nothing to be done. I could basically use them immediately and they were never cut. Of course I still faced the questions: where to place them in the narrative, and do we really need them all? Because they become 'darlings', and important waypoints in the story, excursions into a world still bigger than simply the story of your protagonist.' ■



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Pink Moon tells a gripping father-daughter story that is gut-wrenching to its core, while at the same time allows the audience to laugh and to relativize. In a pure and unsettling fashion, the film broaches the controversial subject of self-determination: the choice to end one's own life when one considers it complete. We watch a stupefied Iris, trying everything she can to keep it together through these distressing, life-changing circumstances. As it slowly sinks in that she won't be able to keep her father alive she, above all, searches for a way to deal with his death wish. Without us, the filmmakers, casting judgement. This film is, therefore, not intended to declare whether someone may consider their life as complete, but instead to reflect on the question: how do we deal with it? We would like to show that we may, in fact, never understand what it means to feel that one's life is complete. Our main character Iris represents the viewer and will confront us with this very complicated and bizarre dilemma.

Even though the Dutch are all about consensus decision-making, we are often watched warily from abroad, as we hold quite liberal ideas on themes such as death, drugs, prostitution, and gay marriage. In the eyes of many foreigners, Dutch people are often seen as more rational than emotional and the way we deal with the subject of a completed life in the Netherlands seems to raise a lot of interest. During the development we pitched the project at Berlinale Talent Script Station; BoostNL; the Netherlands Film Festival and CineMart IFFR – and realized that the project kicked up quite some dust internationally. When we talk about this film with outsiders, we often find they want to understand the origins of Jan's death wish. It seems to make people feel uncomfortable that he's not sick, not suffering from dementia and that he has led a seemingly great life. This is exactly why we think the film's approach is so interesting. There is no doubt that Jan will fulfill his death wish: he has made his decision. It is not our focus to let the audience understand his death wish, instead the focus lies on Iris and her experience in dealing with it. That is why we will get as close to Iris as we can. We witness her struggle, but her incredulity and powerlessness also lead to an inevitable surrender – no matter how bitter that surrender is.



Scriptwriter Bastiaan Kroeger and director Floor van der Meulen both have a strong eye for dramatic situations. They identify the sore points that come with humanity's failings like no other. Although there are others that possess this talent, the mark of true auteurs are their unwavering ability to choose the right perspective and make bold choices within those dramatic moments; thereby translating our failings in unconventional ways and creating visually original scenes. Bastiaan and Floor fearlessly dove deep into sources of pain and conflict, until the real core – in all its sincerity and truthfulness – has been laid bare. They did so with an honest compassion; an approach free of judgement that leaves room for the viewers to make up their own minds. They pose questions instead of presenting cut-and-dried answers. The unfolding drama is allowed to sting, to ache and to echo long after the credits have rolled across the screen. ■

Floor van der Meulen

Director

Floor van der Meulen (1989, the Netherlands) studied Audiovisual Design at the Rotterdam WdKa Art Academy and the School of Visual Arts in New York. In 2014, she made her international debut with her documentary *Storming Paradise*, broadcast by Al Jazeera Channel and screened at numerous international film festivals including DOK Leipzig. *9 Days From My Window In Aleppo* (2015), which she codirected, was selected for International Film Festival Rotterdam, DOK Leipzig, won Best Short Film at the BFI Film Festival London, and picked up, after 85+ festival selections, the Best European Short Film Award at the 29th European Film Awards. Her 45 min drama *In Exile* (2016) was nominated for two 'Dutch Oscars' and won the award for Best Actress. Floor was then selected to the roughcut Editing Station at IDFA Summer School 2018 with her documentary feature debut that she recently finished, *The Last Male On Earth* (2019), which had its world premiere at CPH:DOX in Denmark. Floor directed the NTR hit series *Skam NL* in 2019. *Pink Moon* is her first narrative feature film.



Johan Leysen

Lead Actor

Johan Leysen (1950) began his career in theatre in the Netherlands, before appearing in over 100 productions in a variety of European cities and in a variety of languages. Working with Jean-Luc Godard in 1983 on *Hail Mary* sparked his interest in film.

Ever since, he alternates between stage and film projects.

Selective Filmography

2019 *Hidden Life* Terrence Malick

2015 *The Brand New Testament* Jaco Van Dormael

2013 *Young & Beautiful* François Ozon

2010 *The American* Anton Corbijn

2001 *Brotherhood of the Wolf* Christophe Gans

1994 *Queen Margot* Patrice Chéreau



Julia Akkermans

Lead Actress

Julia Akkermans [1991] graduated from the Maastricht Institute of Performative Arts in 2014, after which she starred in several films and series such as the internationally acclaimed film *Boys* [2013], *Flikken Maastricht* [2014], *Keizersvrouwen* [2019] and the series *Papadag I & II* [2017-2020]. In 2018 she played a supporting role in the feature film *Niemand in de Stad* by Michiel van Erp, for which she won a Golden Kalf for Best Supporting Actress. In 2022 she will be seen in the feature film *Pink Moon* and the Netflix series *Dirty Lines*.



Keplerfilm

After working on award-winning films such as *The Lobster* [Yorgos Lanthimos], *Bullhead* [Michaël R. Roskam], *Blind* [Eskil Vogt] and *Monos* [Alejandro Landes], longtime friends Derk-Jan Warrink and Koji Nelissen founded **Keplerfilm** in 2016. They are currently working on a broad range of films: shorts and features, local productions and international (co)productions and for any platform available. Their first feature film *Buladó* was the Dutch Entry to the Academy Awards, has won Best Film at the Netherlands Film Festival and Best Film at the New York Children's Film Festival. The second, *Captain Nova* [Maurice Trouwborst], opened the 2021 Cinekid Festival and won two jury awards for best Dutch Children's Film and Best Children's Film, as well as the audience award for Best Children's film. Through Eave, Ace and Binger Filmlab, Koji and Derk-Jan were able to expand their international network. Keplerfilm strongly values building a creative breeding ground on which exceptional and talented writers and directors can grow to reach their full potential; inspiring them to find their own personal signatures and to dare to dream big. Keplerfilm's ambition is to tell heartfelt stories – whether up-beat or sad: always deeply humane and with heart. Telling stories about real people with inescapable struggles and genuine desires, while at the same time always seeking to entertain the audience intellectually.





Contact

INTERNATIONAL SALES

Urban Sales

sales@urbangroup.biz

+33 7 62 99 49 19



PUBLICIST

Anne Takahashi

anne@takapr.com

+1 917 825 4340

