

*Greetings
From
Sarajevo*

90 CENTRAL & LIFEDEAM PRODUCTIONS PRESENT GREETINGS FROM SARAJEVO

STARRING KATHRYN KATES & DINA MANGANARIS WITH LIAM MITCHELL • MUSIC BY LUIS ROBERT KING • SOUND DESIGN TIBBO LOCKWOOD

EDITED BY MELISSA SKORBILL • DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NICHOLAS FRIEDMAN • LINE PRODUCER/DIET PRODUCTION MANAGER MARIA PALACIO

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS MAUREN VAN TREASE • PAULA ROTHMAN • GREG KARYCSKA EXECUTIVE PRODUCER PENNY B. JACKSON PRODUCED BY MELISSA SKORBILL

SCREENPLAY BY PENNY B. JACKSON BASED ON HER STAGE PLAY "DIRECTING" • DIRECTED BY MELISSA SKORBILL

GREETINGS FROM SARAJEVO is a story of vengeance and possibly of redemption.

Logline: An assassin arrives in NYC to seek retribution against a war criminal who escaped prosecution for his crimes.



Synopsis: Hana, a young Bosnian soldier arrives in New York on a mission of vengeance. She sneaks past the doorman of a luxury building to rendezvous in the basement laundry with Sofia who provides a gun and instructions.

Sofia, is a survivor of the Bosnian genocide, who's been living a quiet life as a housekeeper in NY until she unexpectedly encounters the soldier responsible for the destruction of her village – and her rapist. Unwilling to let him continue to live unpunished for his crimes, she has plotted the final revenge.

However, when Hana reaches her target, she discovers Stanislav, the monster she was raised to hate, is just a sick, blind, old man. Whether Hana carries out the mission or frees herself from the bonds of the past is the the heart of Hana's journey.

The story, by Penny Jackson, was inspired by the true story of Radovan Karadzic, a notorious Serbian war criminal who was hiding in plain sight in Belgrade.

Greetings From Sarajevo



Director Statement:

As a director I'm drawn to the shadows, the gray areas where the truth is complicated. To well written stories with a clear arc that explores human complexity. Therefore, any chance I get to collaborate with Penny Jackson is one I grab; no questions asked.

It's been clear since the first time I directed one of her short plays five years ago, that we share a vision and are able to push each other to take our creativity to the next level.

When she sent GREETINGS to me for feedback, my immediate response was "Let's make this. Now!" The story of revenge and redemption resonated with me on a deep level. How holding onto the pain from the past shapes the present, is a universal struggle. When that past is horrific: war, rape, devastation – it becomes a multi-generational shared anguish.

The desire to exact vengeance - to honor our ancestors - has shaped history around the world.

GREETINGS is also a fish out of water story. Following Hana as she journeys across Manhattan, the contrast between her mission and the everyday madness of Times Square yields a visual ballet set to Louis Robert Kings driving score. As she nears her prey, the tension builds only to find the monster she was hunting has aged into a decrepit, sad, old man.

The hesitation: will killing someone so close to death bring the satisfaction she craves? Or is it an empty gesture?

Is revenge really a dish best served cold?

Maybe. Maybe not.

The answers aren't always black and white.

Melissa Skirboll
Director



Writer's Statement:

In 1996 I volunteered as an ESL teacher at The English Speakers Union in midtown Manhattan. Most of my students were Muslim men who found jobs working in apartment building as doormen or porters. At first, they were reluctant to discuss the war. But eventually they opened up. Many saw their father or brother leave home never to return. One student hid in his basement for days without water or food. Several had post-traumatic stress syndrome and would jump at any loud sound. They did not discuss their wives or their daughters too much.

I learned what happened to the Muslim women in the Bosnian conflict through a cleaning lady who worked for many people in my building. She told me of the mass rape camps where Serbian generals ordered their men to sexually assault daughters, mothers and grandmothers. She was shocked that one of the most notorious Serbian Generals, Radovan Karadzic, had been hiding in plain sight in Belgrade, working as a holistic doctor.

Later I visited Croatia and spoke to many who lived through the war. Twenty-five years was like yesterday to so many. The older people who survived the war spoke of revenge – the younger generation was more interested in reconciliation. I decided to explore these two points of view in what was originally a short story and then a short play both titled “Directions”.



This film is dedicated to all the bravery of all the Bosnian Women during their country's conflict. There were Serbian women who were victims too. When does revenge turn into forgiveness? I hope this film generates discussion on this theme. As Gandhi once wrote, “an eye for an eye and the world goes blind.”

Penny Jackson

GREETINGS FROM SARAJEVO

Cast and Crew

SOFIA	Kathryn Kates
HANA	Dina Manganaris
STASNISLAV	Liam Mitchell
doorman	Greg Kanyicska
scary guy	Brian Farrell
times square girl 1	Alison Vincitore
times square girl 2	Maria Palacio
angry dude	Tom Chandler
weird guy	Dennis O'Harlem
carefree teen 1	Grace Albano
carefree teen 2	Georgia Wilson
Directed and Edited by	Melissa Skirboll
Written by	Penny Jackson
Executive Producer	Penny Jackson
Producer	Melissa Skirboll
Line Producer/Production Manager	Maureen Van Trease
Associate Producer	Maria Palacio
Associate Producer	Paula Rossman
Associate Producer	Greg Kanyicska
Director of Photography	Noah Friedman
Composer	Louis Robert King
Sound Design/Production Sound	Todd Lockwood
Hair and Make Up	Mickeda Frankie Martin
FX and Online Editor	Zach Lapidus
Colorist	Isabel Padilla
Assistant Director	Tom Chandler
Production Assistants	Brian Farrell
	Alison Vincitore
	Dennis O'Harlem





Film Review by

Darren Tilby, UK Film Review

“Greetings from Sarajevo” comes the vengeance-filled line from steely-eyed Hana (Dina Manganaris), a young Bosnian woman, as she faces down – gun in hand – Stanislav (Liam Mitchell), the man responsible for raping her family and destroying their home. Hana has come to America for this very reason, after Sofia (Kathryn Kates), a relative(?) and fellow victim, spots Stanislav sat at a bus stop in Times Square. Now a trained assassin, Hana has come for revenge.

There’s a confidence that permeates this movie: it’s in the narrative structure; it’s in the character writing; it’s in the direction. But nowhere is it more apparent than in Manganaris’ unfaltering depiction of revenge incarnate—Hana. The way she carries herself rings with echoes of Jodie Comer’s outstanding portrayal of Villanelle (Killing Eve). There’s an elegant composure that belies her penchant for violence, but, hidden not very deep below the surface, is the cold haughtiness of a contract killer. Where Manganaris is calm and collected, Kates (as Sofia) is brimming with hatred: the memories of that day are still fresh; the embitterment it caused is still strong; the yearning for revenge still lies heavy and unsated within her, and she isn’t afraid to show it.

Fittingly, there’s a distinctly feminal undercurrent running through the movie. The two women are, quite rightly so, at the centre of this 10-minute long short film, which delves into peoples’ (in)ability to cope with, and process, trauma; in this case,

rape. Driven by excellent, equanimous direction (Melissa Skirboll), and superb writing (by Penny Jackson) – but which does falter slightly towards the end of the film – Greetings from Sarajevo resonates with feminal energy and delivers an unapologetically feminine perspective. And it’s all the better for it.

The filmmaking prowess continues with the film’s superlative cinematography (Noah Friedman), which introduces our central characters with a neat finesse rarely seen. And, while it’s simple in its composition, this is also what makes it work so well. There’s no excessive glitz and glam here; no needless attempt to punch above its weight, just solid, well-constructed cinematography and narrative-lead/supporting camerawork. My only real gripe with the movie is the ending. It’s hard to get into without venturing into spoiler territory, but it essentially leaves in ambiguity, which is fine. I prefer it when a movie leaves me to dwell on what may or may not have happened. But it’s the fact that it doesn’t fully explain or justify the ambiguity. We’re kind of just left wondering: ‘Well, why?’

Greetings from Sarajevo is a solid piece of filmmaking; a terrific thriller with a gripping premise and captivating lead performance from Dina Manganaris - in only her second film role, I might add! But the true essence of the movie lies with Melissa Skirboll’s direction and Penny Jackson’s writing. Both of which work in absolute harmony, creating a film which, like its main character, radiates with an assertive self-assurance.

<https://www.ukfilmreview.co.uk/post/greetings-from-sarajevo-short-film-review>

Film Review by

Richard Propes, The Independent Critic

Melissa Skirboll's *Greetings from Sarajevo* is a quiet, engaging 10-minute thriller centered around a young Bosnian woman, Hana (Dina Manganaris), who arrives in New York City after being tipped off by Sofia (Kathryn Kates) that the man, Stanislav (Liam Mitchell), responsible for rape and murder of her family is in New York City. Having trained for this very moment, Hana has arrived with her eye on revenge.

As Hana, Manganaris gives a riveting, fiercely focused performance that draws us in and doesn't let us go. We care about her almost instantly, the film's opening moments establishing some sort of relationship between she and Sofia that is never defined but is painfully obvious. This allows Manganaris to show Hana's human side, a side you might not expect to see in a 10-minute short almost entirely wrapped around an expected hit.

The story that unfolds, penned by Penny B. Jackson, is never less than engaging and refuses to reveal easy answers. The film's ending satisfies yet leaves you guessing, the resolution never quite expected but somehow making sense. There's a lot that unfolds over the course of *Greetings from Sarajevo*, yet the story doesn't feel rushed and the story feels complete by the time the closing credits are rolling.

In addition to Manganaris's terrific performance, Kathryn Kates shines as

Sofia, an older woman who wears her emotional scars like a worn-out coat and for whom this entire affair feels particularly heavy. While in the film relatively briefly, Liam Mitchell's facial expressions say it all in a substantial turn as the mysterious Stanislav.



Louis Robert King's original score is the perfect accompaniment to the film, each note existing somewhere between thriller and intimate drama. Noah Friedman's lensing captures the film's universality and the urban busyness of a New York City where you can simultaneously be invisible and constantly seen.

While the festival world has been interrupted by the current COVID-19 pandemic, *Greetings from Sarajevo* is a short film that deserves to be seen by a wider audience and one can only hope that this nasty virus steps aside and the indie world checks out this quiet yet engaging and human thriller.

https://theindependentcritic.com/greetings_from_sarajevo

GREETINGS FROM SARAJEVO makes 'us' the judge on the complexity of war crimes and personal revenge.

Rich Monetti, Take 2 Indie Review

If the word Sarajevo is in the title of a movie, the film goer has a pretty good idea where the drama will lead. The war crimes that took place during the violent breakup of Yugoslavia will likely get a hearing and a victim and a perpetrator will play the central roles. There's no definite sense at the outset of Melissa Skirboll's Award Winning short film *Greetings from Sarajevo*. But the clues come quickly and we soon realize that the 10 minute short written by Penny Jackson is about justice, revenge and redemption.

Hana (Dina Manganaris) has arrived in New York City and the monotone, lonely accompaniment of the piano keynotes by Louis Robert King reveals that whatever she is searching for will require more than just a home address.

So spying the surroundings like any new New York City traveler, Hana's introduction is spliced between the view and the profile features of Sofia. She's the elderly woman that Hana is ready to conspire with on this profound journey.

Thus, the indentations worn on the face of Kathryn Kates tell a much deeper story than the weathered chisel of a lifelong New Yorker. Her eyes also express a pain that won't ever be alleviated by the typical respites away from the mass of cement and human clutter.

Either way, the certainty of the tale comes soon after Sofia and Hana make their connection. The subterranean laundry room that the older woman ekes a living out of defines the hollowed soul that tragedy has left behind, and the concealed weapon she presents to Hana is meant to be the filler.

Then with all the weight that a lifetime has given, Sofia takes the opportunity to draw analogy to the dead end existence that the past

has forced her to. "They call this an unfinished basement for unfinished people like me," Kates' delivery resigns us to the character's bottomless pain.

So the life force zapped out of Sofia, Hana's youth picks up the slack in the role of assassin. But this contract killing is personal. Hana's mother and sister were also victims, and as the duo verbalize the names together, the atrocity becomes personal for *us* too.

A cut to the the mass of grave stones in Sarajevo ups the ante and another New York City traverse stands between the reckoning. On the streets, through the turnstile and disembarking the platform for the subway, the keynotes quicken and elevate the necessity for action. On the other hand, guitar strings are added in and foreshadows that the agreed upon retribution is more complex than it seems.

The ambiguity of the mission thickens even further via the breathing landscape that Noah Friedman creates with his cinematography, and Manganaris drives home the point by playing second fiddle to the heartbeat all around.

Still, Hana must come back, and we finally get a look at the war criminal. Stanislav is an old, blind feeble man, and Liam Mitchell's blank stare doesn't translate to the enormity of his past crimes.

But the moment of truth remains, and all the juxtaposition reigns as we stand face to face with the debt that Stanislav owes. So Hana must decide if holding and executing the note will free her, and let the dead rest easy.

The monumental conundrum is a question we would all answer in a different way, and to the film's credit, *Greetings from Sarajevo* knows it can't speak for everyone. So Hana's decision and Sofia's fate becomes ours in a manner that is *personal* to each of us.

<https://take2indiereview.net/2021/07/greetings-from-sarajevo/>

Interviews and Articles (LINKS)

Agnés Film

*Partnership and making movies:
A conversation between collaborators.*

with Melissa Skirboll and Penny Jackson

Full article at:

<https://agnesfilms.com/female-filmmakers/partnership-and-making-movies-a-conversation-between-collaborators/>



Borrego Springs Film Festival

*5Q's w/Melissa Skirboll director
"Greetings From Sarajevo"*

http://www.borregospringsfilmfestival.org/5qs/2020/12/9/5qs-wmelissa-skirboll-greetings-from-sarajevo-director?fbclid=IwAR22aPU4LHq6ko-d7_BpZJ5j5u3KG3J0ypXhKtvCuFGCnDJBpwEbnvGQgl0



Bull City International Film Festival

*Talking to Melissa Skirboll director
"Greetings From Sarajevo"*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=018LfXvZkWQ>