

DANCE WITH THE SHADOWS

A PSYCHOLOGICAL SHORT FILM

Written by Daniel Porto

Directed by Maria Maya



Two voices. One body. One final sunset.

LOGLINE

intimacy
inside
isolation

On a Hell's Kitchen rooftop, two close friends spend a golden sunset drinking, smoking, joking, and dancing through an existential conversation. As the light fades, small contradictions suggest their friendship may be unfolding inside a single fractured mind.

Friendship first. Truth later.

THE CENTRAL CONCEIT

Otto 1 and Otto 2 first appear as two inseparable friends sharing a private ritual above the city.

Gradually, visual contradictions accumulate: a selfie shows only one of them; their eyelines do not always resolve; their matching tattoo belongs to one body.

Only at the end is Otto 1 understood as the part of Otto 2 that can comfort, provoke, enable, and witness him — but cannot save him from himself.

AT FIRST

TWO FRIENDS

BY THE END

ONE DIVIDED SELF

The reveal belongs to camera, performance, sound, and absence — never to a literal mirror image.

A farewell unfolds as a rooftop ritual

SHORT SYNOPSIS

At sunset, Otto 1 and Otto 2 arrive on a Hell's Kitchen rooftop with beer, prescription pills, a phone, and the restless energy of people trying to make an unbearable decision feel ordinary. They joke about family, judgment, fear, and the patterns they cannot break.

As daylight disappears, tenderness and irritation give way to confession. Otto 2 admits he does not want to wake up. Otto 1 urges him to dance, counts the remaining pills, and stays beside him through the final toast.



THE WARMTH IS REAL. SO IS THE DANGER.

Two actors carry one divided consciousness

CAST & CHARACTERS

OTTO 1 — PABLO MORAIS

The friend who reaches: funny, provocative, hopeful, and determined to keep the conversation alive.

OTTO 2 — PAOLO ANTONIO

The friend who withdraws: vulnerable, exhausted, anxious, and increasingly certain that sleep is the only relief.



PAOLO ANTONIO • PABLO MORAIS

THE ROOFTOP IS A SUSPENDED WORLD

Above Hell's Kitchen, the city is close enough to see and too far away to interrupt them.

This is the confirmed filming location. Its open skyline, neighboring windows, terrace boundaries, and access to the adjoining interior allow the camera to move between friendship, illusion, and objective reality without leaving one contained world.

SUNSET

freedom + farewell



The deck follows the sunset into the truth

NARRATIVE RHYTHM

DAY

Fragments

Play-fighting,
shouting, selfies,
jokes — behavior
presented as
memory before
context.

SUNSET

Confession

Family patterns,
anxiety, medication,
and fear enter the
conversation.

BLUE HOUR

Dance

A burst of awkward
freedom briefly turns
the rooftop into a
private celebration.

NIGHT

Recognition

The pills are gone.
The double
separates from the
body. The final
image tells the truth.

DANCE BECOMES A TEMPORARY EXIT

The bodies should never feel polished or choreographed. Their awkwardness is the point: movement offers a few seconds in which self-consciousness, judgment, and fear lose their authority.

**Two friends in the light.
One consciousness underneath.**



The image moves between memory and evidence

VISUAL LANGUAGE

CAMERA

Fragmented montage and close bodily details gradually give way to wider frames that expose the spatial truth.

DUPLICATION

Reflections, selfies, eyelines, blocking, and repeated gestures reveal the double without visual effects becoming the subject.

COLOR

Cobalt isolation, amber connection, and oxidized coral danger replace the bright orange palette of the earlier deck.

PERFORMANCE

The same emotional DNA must live in both Ottos, while each carries a different rhythm, posture, and defense.



THE SUNSET IS BEAUTIFUL. ~~THE~~ TABLE IS NOT.

BEER BOTTLES + CANS

A casual ritual that grows heavier as the night advances.

PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE + PILLS

A visible countdown — and the story's most dangerous measure of time.

CELL PHONE + SELFIE

The first objective image that contradicts the existence of two men.

MATCHING TATTOO

A symbol of union that ultimately belongs to one body.

SMALL TABLE

The altar of the evening: ordinary objects arranged around an irreversible decision.

Sound begins inside Otto's head

SOUND & MUSIC

VOICEOVER

A fractured interior monologue opens the film before the relationship has context, making language feel remembered rather than spoken.

MELANCHOLIC INSTRUMENTAL

Carries the opening montage and the ache beneath apparent playfulness.

THE UPBEAT SONG

Arrives when Otto 1 asks Otto 2 to dance. It should create movement, not emotional instruction — a temporary interruption rather than a promise of recovery.

When Otto 2 stops dancing, the music stops with him. Breath, wind, bottles, distant traffic, and rooftop machinery reclaim the scene.

The film looks at pain without romanticizing it

THEMATIC CORE

MENTAL HEALTH

Depression and anxiety are lived conditions, not aesthetic identities.

SELF-DIVISION

The person who comforts us can also be the voice that permits our worst impulse.

INHERITED PATTERNS

Otto recognizes his mother inside his own behavior — and fears repetition more than judgment.

MASCULINE VULNERABILITY

Humor, teasing, alcohol, and physical play mask the need to be held and understood.

CONNECTION

Being seen matters, but companionship alone cannot replace intervention, care, or treatment.

MEMORY

The opening fragments return at the end as evidence of a consciousness rewriting its own final night.

DIRECTOR'S VISION

The sunlight must make us want to be there.

The film lives in contradiction. The rooftop is beautiful. The sunset is warm. The conversation is funny, intimate, and full of the freedom that exists between two friends who believe they understand each other completely.

When the image finally reaches night, Otto is already dead. Darkness is not the mood of the film — it is the consequence.

MARIA MAYA

DANCE WITH THE SHADOWS



Tonal references: memory and the divided self

COMPARABLE FILMS

AFTERSUN

Charlotte Wells

A reference for emotional memory, fragmentary observation, and the painful distance between what a loved one performs and what they are living internally.

FIGHT CLUB

David Fincher

A structural reference for split identity and a companion who embodies disowned impulses — while this film remains quieter, more intimate, and grounded in vulnerability.

These are formal and tonal touchstones, not templates for the film's story.

A contained production with a precise visual challenge

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

FORMAT

Short film

SETTING

Hell's Kitchen, New York City

PERFORMANCE CONCEPT

Two versions of one man

STAGE

Development / packaging

GENRE

Psychological drama

PRIMARY LOCATION

Rooftop + adjoining apartment

SCREENPLAY

Complete

CURRENT FOCUS

Producing, financing, and strategic partners

The filmmakers

CREATIVE TEAM

MARIA MAYA

DIRECTOR • PRODUCER

Brazilian filmmaker, director, producer, and actress based in New York City. A UNIRIO Performing Arts graduate with filmmaking training at the New York Film Academy, Maria brings an actor-centered approach to visually driven stories about intimacy, silence, identity, and emotional transformation. Her award-winning shorts include Routine, Bodies, Bitter Crumbs, and Bubble Gum.

DANIEL PORTO

SCREENWRITER

Brazilian playwright and screenwriter whose work spans theater, television comedy, and independent cinema. He has written more than fifteen plays, served as a final writer on Vai Que Cola and A Vila, directed the LGBTQIA+ short Chemsex, and collaborated with Maria Maya on Routine.

Written by Daniel Porto • Directed by Maria Maya

BEFORE THE SHADOWS,

there was a
perfect sunset.

DANCE WITH THE SHADOWS

A SHORT FILM BY MARIA MAYA

SEEKING PRODUCING, FINANCING,
AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

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