



UMBILICAL CORD

AN INTIMATE PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA

Written by Daniel Porto & Maria Maya • Directed by Maria Maya

A woman can inherit a wound without surrendering her future.

LOGLINE

**Choice.
Memory.
The cost of
care.**

When a 42-year-old prosecutor becomes unexpectedly pregnant, a buried family lie forces her to confront the trauma behind her fear of motherhood — while caring for the mother who helped silence it.

The story lives inside one impossible choice

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Betina has built a controlled life: a demanding career, a long-term relationship, and a strict caregiving routine for Zeneide, her mother, whose Alzheimer's is erasing the past. An unexpected pregnancy breaks that control.

Searching for answers, Betina returns to the doctor who treated her at fifteen and discovers that the medical story defining her life was a lie. As memory, resentment, and responsibility collide, she must decide what to carry forward — and what to cut away.

“Who takes care of whom?”

The question moves through every relationship: daughter and mother, patient and doctor, woman and partner — until care becomes an act of self-determination.

BETINA

42 • PROSECUTOR • DAUGHTER

Competent, composed, and practiced at survival. Betina can manage a courtroom, a household, and her mother's decline — but not the return of a body memory she was taught to mistrust.

Her arc is not about learning to become a mother. It is about reclaiming authorship over what motherhood can mean.



Each relationship reframes motherhood

ZENEIDE

————— The mother losing her memory — and the keeper of a silence Betina cannot forget.

MIRIAM

————— The doctor who once protected Betina, then returns with a truth carrying its own scars.

MARTA

————— A caregiver who chooses pregnancy and domestic life on her own terms.

HEITOR

————— A loving partner whose desire for fatherhood exposes the limits of their shared future.



CARE IS THE FILM'S MOST INTIMATE FORM OF CONFLICT

Bathing. Feeding. Dressing. Holding down. Letting go.

The physical grammar of care reveals what dialogue cannot.

The film asks who owns a woman's future

BODILY AUTONOMY

A choice made without sanctification or punishment.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

What passes between women when memory becomes unreliable.

CAREGIVING

Duty, resentment, tenderness, and the right to step away.

NONTRADITIONAL MOTHERHOOD

Love and maternal capacity outside the expected family structure.

DIRECTOR'S VISION

Umbilical Cord explores the invisible inheritance passed between women across generations. It does not debate motherhood as an abstract idea; it investigates choice, memory, and the emotional cost of expectations placed on women.

I want the audience to feel the friction between a cold, unyielding world and performances that remain warm, precise, and painfully human. The film stays close to bodies, objects, and unfinished gestures — where silence becomes evidence.

**The story refuses easy
villains, heroic sacrifice,
or idealized
reconciliation.**

Its final movement transforms rupture into possibility: a woman can sever inherited harm and still choose connection.

A cold frame holds warm, volatile performances

VISUAL LANGUAGE

PALETTE

Cool grays, aged beige, oxidized burgundy, weak amber light.

CAMERA

Controlled compositions give way to fragments, reflections, and bodily detail.

TEXTURE

Worn apartments, cracked porcelain, stained mirrors, paper records, cigarette smoke.

RHYTHM

Procedural care and domestic repetition rupture into memory, rage, and release.

Sound favors breath, domestic machinery, television bleed, and the pulse of the ultrasound over explanatory score.

THE STORY BEFORE THE MAP

The short remains intentionally location-neutral at this stage. Its emotional geography comes first: an aging apartment, an old clinic, a church, worn streets, and a final open space where the frame can breathe.

A New York-area relocation is under consideration, but no city or neighborhood is yet part of the film's official setting. The location study identifies three possibilities, each offering a different atmosphere without changing the story.

STATEN ISLAND

**domestic intimacy
and isolation**

BRIGHTON BEACH

**walking, reflection
and the final park**

FAR ROCKAWAY

**coast, old houses
and solitude**

Tonal references: restraint and moral complexity

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

Lynne Ramsay

Fragmented
subjectivity and the
violence of memory.

AMOUR

Michael Haneke

Caregiving observed
without
sentimentality.

VOLVER

Pedro Almodóvar

Women, buried
family truth, and
intergenerational
repair.

PARALLEL MOTHERS

Pedro Almodóvar

Motherhood and
identity shaped by
concealed history.

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

A contained short with an expansive afterlife

POSITIONING

An actor-driven production built around a small principal ensemble, recurring interiors, and a precise visual language.

- Festival-forward arthouse drama
- Women-centered and internationally legible
- Socially resonant without becoming didactic
- A proof of voice with feature-scale thematic depth

THE AUDIENCE

Viewers drawn to psychologically rigorous, female-led cinema about family, memory, bodily autonomy, and the forms love can take after rupture.

Designed for festivals, curated streaming, and partners seeking distinctive international voices.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

FORMAT

Short film

SETTING

Open — New York-area options under consideration

STAGE

Development / packaging

GENRE

Psychological drama

SCREENPLAY

Complete

CURRENT FOCUS

Producing, financing, and strategic partnerships

A collaboration rooted in character

MARIA MAYA

CO-WRITER • DIRECTOR

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 storytelling. Her award-winning shorts include Routine, Bodies, Bitter Crumbs, and Bubble Gum.

DANIEL PORTO

CO-WRITER

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.

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**Some bonds are inherited.
Others are chosen.**

UMBILICAL CORD

A SHORT FILM BY MARIA MAYA

SEEKING PRODUCING, FINANCING, AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Contact available upon request

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