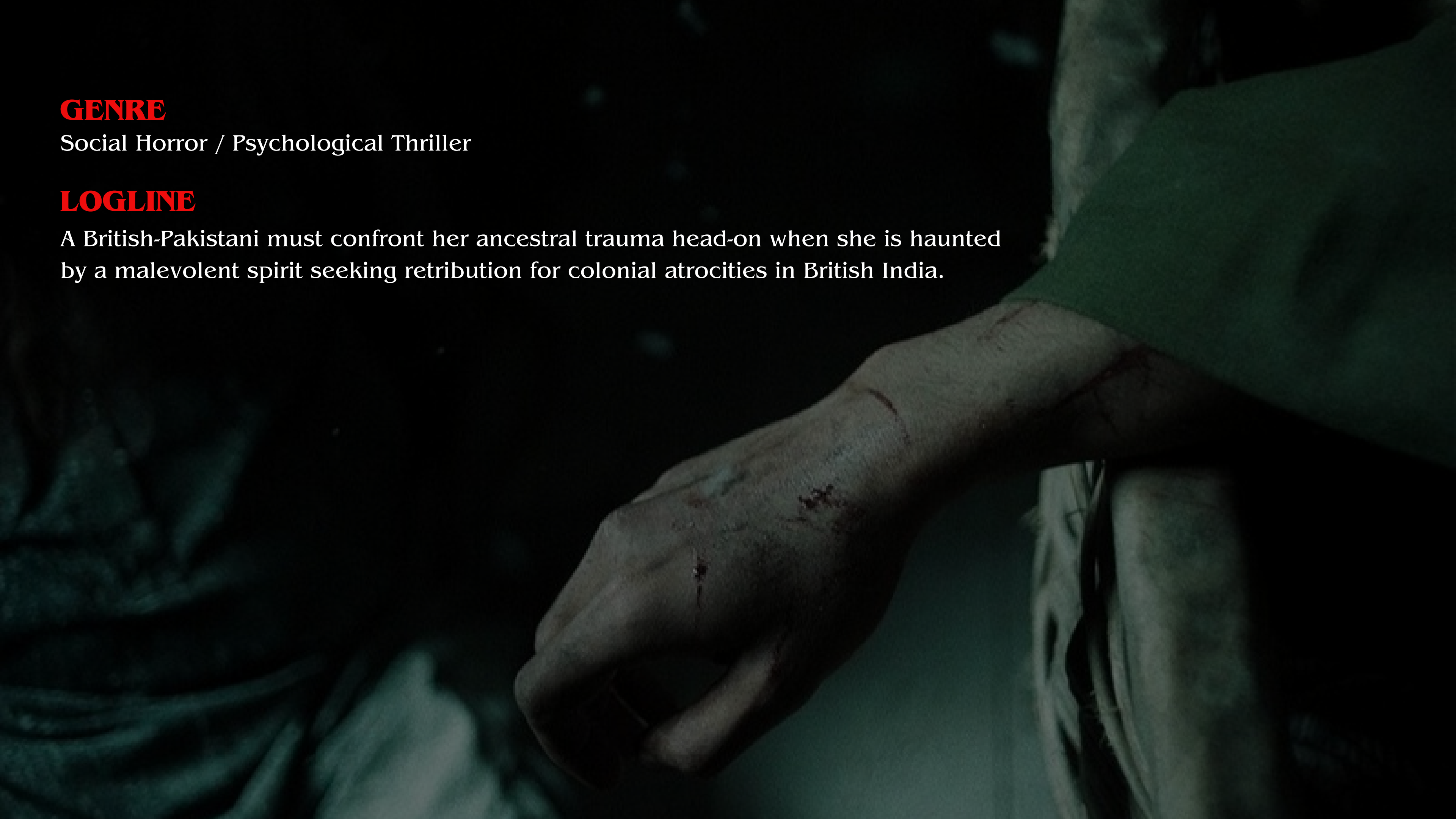


LEAVE ME ALONE

A feature film by Shehroze Khan



GENRE

Social Horror / Psychological Thriller

LOGLINE

A British-Pakistani must confront her ancestral trauma head-on when she is haunted by a malevolent spirit seeking retribution for colonial atrocities in British India.

SYNOPSIS

Islam 'Izzy' Choudhry has won a place at a coveted **WRITER'S RETREAT**. As she seeks inspiration for her novel at the dazzling Dorrington manor, she starts to see **HORRIFIC DREAMS** of **DEATH** and **APPARITIONS** of a decrepit mythical spirit - a **CHURAIL**.

Izzy starts to piece the gaps with clues from odd **ORIENTALIST** portraits, paintings and books around the manor. Her **FRACTURED** relationship with her own **HERITAGE** comes to light as she is forced to live out visceral visions of the horrors committed by the British Raj.

More than that, she is dealing with a borderline abusive writing mentor who pushes Izzy beyond her limits, blurring the lines between artistic **PERFECTIONISM** and sexual **MISCONDUCT**.

Now, she must confront her **ANCESTRAL TRAUMA** head-on as she battles for survival and uncovers a truth about her heritage far more insidious than she could have imagined.

THEMES



Intergenerational Trauma



Identity



Colonial legacy

The myth of the **CHURAIL**

Churails are a part of South Asian folklore - a **MYTHICAL SPIRIT**. They are traditionally women who have been gravely wronged, and come back to seek **VENGEANCE** on the oppressors, recognisable only from their **BACKWARD FEET**.

Our Churail is a young woman called NURUN NISSA from 19th century British-India, who was married to a white soldier. In the 1840s, when the Empire felt threatened by such occurrences, they outlawed intermarriages, and light-skinned children were stripped from their mothers and taken back to Britain - their heritages erased.

The anguish causes Nur to drown herself, and become resurrected as a Churail with the vengeance of every brown woman who was wrong by the British - she casts a **CURSE** on the offending family - the Dorringtons - causing their children to slowly die out over time, **EXTINGUISHING** their lineage until she can finally **TAKE BACK** what was wrongfully taken from her - her child.

Our Churail takes inspiration from the classic South Asian myth, with a completely original colonial-inspired origin story which is based on real history.



WHY THIS, WHY NOW?

2027 will mark 80 years since the **PARTITION** of India — an event that tore nations apart, but also echoed centuries of British colonial rule that left deep economic and psychological scars still felt today. *Leave Me Alone* doesn't just revisit that history; it uses the **HAUNTED HOUSE** genre to ask: what does it mean to carry those ghosts in our bodies today?

We are living in a moment where the colonial past is erupting into the present. From mass anti-immigration protests, to the repatriation of looted artifacts to heated debates around statues and school curriculums, societies are being forced to reckon with the **LEGACIES** of **EMPIRE**. Yet the unspoken inheritance of colonialism — the way its traumas are carried in bodies, families, and identities — is rarely dramatized on screen.

Horror has become one of the most vital spaces for social commentary, with films like *Get Out*, *His House*, and *Talk to Me* proving that audiences crave big ideas wrapped in thrills. Questions of identity, heritage, and justice are urgent and personal.

This film draws from that lineage while breaking new ground: by invoking the folkloric Churail as a metaphor for **INHERITED TRAUMA**, it fuses the terrifying and the political in a way that is both culturally specific and globally accessible. Archetypes of the vengeful spirit exist in every culture (Mexican 'La Llorona', Irish 'Banshees', the European 'White Lady'), making the film both fresh and familiar.

Izzy's arc isn't just about being South Asian; it's about feeling like an outsider, suffering imposter syndrome, wrestling with perfectionism, and questioning one's sanity. Increasingly, we all navigate multilayered realities: family histories, social pressures, private fears, and public identities. This film makes those layers terrifyingly tangible - stories that don't just look back at history, but reveal how that history shapes who we are now.

Leave Me Alone is not simply a horror film; it is a **CULTURAL EXORCISM**. Stories like this can deliver all the suspense and spectacle Horror fans crave while centering an emotional, character-driven journey that transcends culture or geography, and sparks **CRUCIAL DIALOGUE** we so urgently need,

A dimly lit room, possibly a restaurant or a formal gathering, with several people seated at tables. The scene is illuminated by warm, glowing candles on the tables. In the foreground, a woman with long, dark hair and bangs is seated at a table, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She is wearing a dark, patterned top. In the background, other people are seated at tables, some looking towards the camera and others looking away. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and somber.

CHARACTERS

Izzy

ISLAM CHOUDHRY

Izzy has always dealt with pain by **RUNNING** from it, and pushing it to the side. She's got the stiff upper lip of a Brit, and the emotional **REPRESSION** of a Pakistani. Having recently been through a traumatic stillbirth which has lead to episodes of PTSD, and a **MARRIAGE** that is **FADING** dimmer by the day, Izzy pours everything into her writing.



Everything changes when she finally gets the break she was looking for. A prestigious industry-accredited Writer's Retreat. But fuelled by **IMPOSTER SYNDROME**, and a new-found realisation that she is completely **DISCONNECTED** from her **CULTURAL HERITAGE**, the high pressure and heavily caffeinated nights finally get to her. Izzy finds herself deteriorating into a worse state of psychosis, vulnerable to abusive advances, and making bad decisions. Nothing can change until she is finally able to confront the thing she has been running from all these years - her own **PAIN**.

POTENTIAL CAST

KIRAN SONIA SAWAR
BLACK MIRROR / THE NEVERS

Richard **Dorrington**

Boyishly handsome, booker prize-winning author and Izzy's writing instructor. He comes from wealth and privilege, most of which was amassed through **COLONIAL** trade. A true artist, Richard believes in **PUSHING** people beyond their limits, blurring the lines between perfectionism and **TOXIC ABUSE**.

Like all the Dorringtons, Richard's primary objective is the **PRESERVATION** of the family **LINE**.



Peggy & Clive

Married couple facilitating the writer's retreat. The **LAST** of the **DORRINGTON LINE**, along with Richard. Well travelled folk, like to think of themselves as cultural appreciators but are in actuality **APPROPRIATORS** constantly fetishising the brown experience, unwittingly sexualising them, and unable to see them beyond their brownness.

Clive dresses in South Asian attire, eats the food, plays the 'exotic' instruments reveling in their time in the subcontinent. Peggy comes across as more icy, and it is revealed she has always wanted a baby, but due to **CHURAIL'S CURSE**, has **MISCARRIED** 19 times.



Peggy & Clive, 1979



Irfan & Layla

Irfan is the Dorrington's caretaker, **IMPORTED** fresh from **PAKISTAN**. He was never taught any English. Plagued by mystery, Izzy cannot tell what his feelings are about the Dorringtons - at times, he feels fully institutionalised, and at others, she wonders if he is crying for help.

Layla seems to be Irfan's secret wife. One of the reasons Izzy keeps hearing a baby crying is because they have a new born child. Hidden away in the servant quarters, ultimately powerless - in many ways, **COLONISED**.



The Participants



TIM

Tim is visibly embarrassed by his background — the Dorrington name, with all its wealth and conservatism, hangs on him like an itchy suit. He's trying very hard to shed it: all-black wardrobe, leftist reading list, constant critiques of power and privilege. He talks the talk of rebellion, and sometimes even means it. But the harder he runs, the more visible the shadow of where he came from becomes. His politics are sincere, but his identity is a performance still in flux — and some part of him knows it.



CINDY

Warm, grounded, and disarmingly maternal, Cindy often takes on the role of den mother — offering snacks, tissues, or quiet reassurance. But beneath her softness lies a more complex cultural positioning. Raised in a mildly Indian nationalist household, she isn't overtly political, but when certain topics arise — Kashmir, Pakistan, colonial legacy — her inherited views surface, sometimes jarringly. She doesn't mean to offend, but her presence reveals the often unspoken divisions within South Asian communities.



CHARLIE

Charlie is the guy who won't stop making jokes, especially the kind that toe the line — and then stomp on it. A proud listener of Andrew Tate and Joe Rogan, he sees himself as a warrior against "cancel culture" and "over-sensitivity." He's smart, quick-witted, and deeply annoying — especially to Izzy, who becomes his favorite target. But his provocations are often a shield. He hides behind irony and pranks, terrified that taking anything seriously might reveal how little he actually knows about himself.



ROSHNI

Roshni has presence. Fiercely articulate, politically conscious, and unapologetically proud of her Kashmiri identity, she's the kind of person who commands attention and refuses compromise. She's immediately skeptical of Izzy's naiveté and frustrated by the filmmaker's shallow grasp of cultural nuance. To her, representation is not a game. But as the walls come down, Roshni begins to see Izzy's heart, and an unexpected closeness forms — forged in tension, but sustained by shared vulnerability.

Dorrington Manor

Set in the present-day, our story unfolds inside a remote Victorian manor — not just a setting, but a **CHARACTER** in its own right. Like *The Shining* or *Hill House*, its corridors shift and its rooms breathe, mirroring Izzy's fragile grip on reality. In moments, a grand Victorian living room flickers into a Partition-era train carriage, recalling the dreamlike fractures of *Last Night in Soho*.

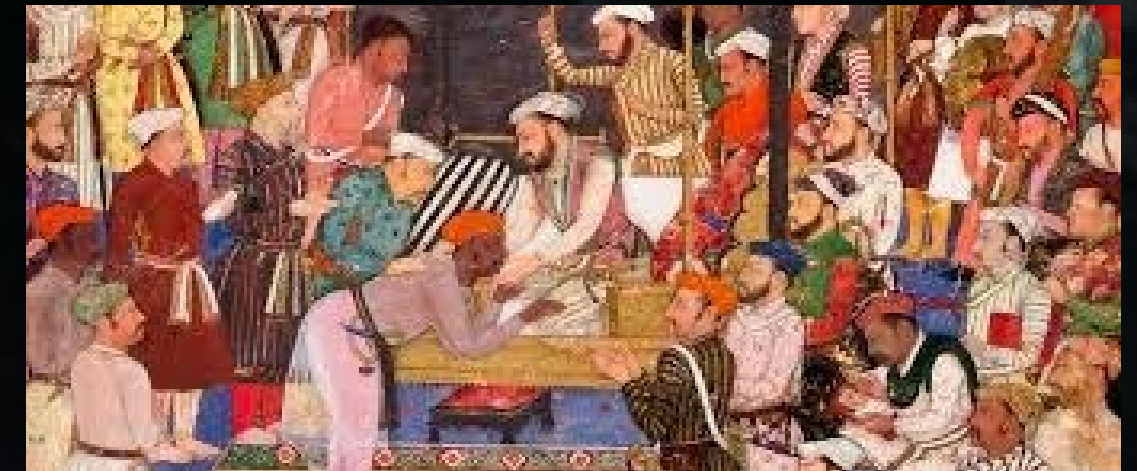
The manor embodies Britain's unspoken history — a post-war estate built on **COLONIAL WEALTH**, its walls lined with stern portraits of white men whose gaze never fades. It is both a monument to the supposed "glory" of empire and a mausoleum of its **CRIMES**. For Izzy, a British-Pakistani woman, these watchful stares are more than unsettling: they are reminders that she does not belong, that the **GHOSTS** of empire remain embedded in every brick, every painting, every echoing hall.



Orientalist Influence

Laced through the opulence of Victorian tradition, the manor conceals subtle yet insidious relics of **EMPIRE** — oil paintings, tattered books, and fragments of art that whisper imperial nostalgia. These seemingly benign artifacts evoke the so-called '**GLORY**' of Empire, but on closer inspection, they reveal a darker truth: a worldview that once positioned the colonized as '**SAVAGE**,' '**BACKWARDS**,' or '**SUB-HUMAN**.'

For Izzy, these clues become a psychological minefield. They fracture her sense of belonging, forcing her to confront — perhaps for the first time — the **DISSONANCE** of being proudly British and of Pakistani heritage. The house becomes a stage where identity, inheritance, and historical violence collide, leaving Izzy suspended in a haunting **RECKONING** with the **COLONIAL GAZE**.





PLOT SUMMARY

ACT I: The Retreat

1947, India. A young girl fleeing terror with only a doll and her family's hopes in tow. Just when she thinks she has reached safety, and boarded a train to freedom - masked men enter the train, **MASSACRING** everyone in sight. The girl grabs her doll tighter, preparing for what is to come.

Fast forward to present-day London, aspiring Writer Izzy Choudhary jolts awake. In the aftermath of a collapsing marriage, a stalled career, and a traumatic **STILLBIRTH**, Izzy Choudhry clings to her one chance at reinvention: a place at the mysterious Dorrington Writer's Fellowship. She joins 7 other writers, desperate to prove herself. The Foundation, revealed to be built on **COLONIAL WEALTH** amassed from India, now aims to uplift creatives from formerly colonized lands. One lucky participant will receive a £100,000 grant at the end to support their maintenance costs. Naturally this sparks intense competition between everyone, with subtle acts of exclusion reminding her she doesn't belong. Izzy struggles with **IMPOSTER SYNDROME**, and is accused by the other South Asians of using her British-Pakistani identity to exploit her community's trauma for personal gain.

The Dorrington manor which initially poses as a dream for where Izzy could be if her career pans out the way she likes, becomes completely unnerving — its post-war halls lined with stern colonial portraits, its corridors stretching like a labyrinth. Nestled in the midst of this decorum, she finds subtle reminders that the house was built off wealth amassed during colonial India. Izzy tries to ignore her growing unease with the gazes of white men in portraits, and reminders of the colonial legacy dotted through the house, focusing instead on the the magnetic authority of mentor Richard Dorrington. But cracks begin to show: disturbing **VISIONS** in mirrors, guttural whispers at night, the sense that time itself bends inside the house.

Izzy is unsure whether she is going through a **PTSD** from her stillbirth, a **PSYCHOSIS** from a family history, or something more sinister. The pressure mounts until one night, a flicker of reality transforms the manor's drawing room into a blood-soaked Partition train carriage. History has torn through the walls, and Izzy realizes she is being dragged into a nightmare where the past refuses to stay buried. The retreat is no longer an escape — it's a **TRAP**.

ACT II - The Haunting

The fellowship spirals into a pressure cooker. Rivalries become more **TOXIC**, Richard's mentorship grows more **PREDATORY**, and Izzy's visions intensify, centring around a spectral decrepit creature with backwards feet, The **CHURAIL**. As Izzy unravels, she uncovers fragments of the manor's history: wealth built on exploitation, Indian women violated and erased, and a legacy of cruelty stretching back generations.

Isolated from her peers, she finds herself tormented by Richard in the guise of artistic perfectionism. Just when Izzy can't take it anymore, her husband Allan winds up at the house, revealing that Izzy had left in the middle of the night without even telling him, and she had suffered bouts of psychosis previously. For a brief moment, Izzy finds peace in having her husband once more, and the fact that they can leave together, and work on rectifying their marriage with a fresh start. They spend the night together, but when she wakes, it couldn't be worse—she wakes up in Richard's bed. Naked.

Discombobulated, her mind blanks. What happened with Richard? She sneaks out. Her shame deepens. Googling pills she finds on his bedside table, it reveals they're Rohypnol. Her paranoia spikes. Worse, she is starting to feel very nauseous.

That morning, while packing to leave the house, Izzy realises she is finding truths about her identity and heritage she has never confronted, which is unlocking all kinds of purpose in her. She starts to see visions of her own grandmother, being the young girl from the partition at the beginning, and realises how resounding the impact of this cataclysmic event was on her, despite a lack of connection to it.

Against her better judgement, Izzy decides to send Allan home and stay in the manor till the retreat ends. She quickly realises however, she is **PREGNANT**, and this pregnancy is progressing unnaturally fast.

ACT III - The Reckoning

9 months of pregnancy are expedited in 3 harrowing days. Labour rips through Izzy's body as the manor descends into chaos.

The Churail is not only tormenting her — it is **CHOOSING** her. When she discovers that Izzy is the blood descendant of Nurun Nissa, an Indian woman **BRUTALISED** by the Dorrington family, Izzy realizes she has been lured here not by chance but by inheritance. The fellowship is a masquerade; the real story is a **CURSE** on the Dorringtons that threatens to extinguish their entire lineage.

Richard, and the surviving Dorringtons, are revealed as exploiters colonising in the same way their British ancestors did, his authority crumbling as the Churail's curse demands payment.

Izzy finds all the answers she has been looking for, as she is viscerally forced to relive her ancestry's agony to learn about it: the **STOLEN** child, the **SILENCED** grief, the **RAGE** of all the brown women wronged by their colonial masters that gave birth to the Churail. For the first time, she stops resisting and confronts the horror head-on, embodying the pain her people - her family - have carried for generations.

In a harrowing climax, Izzy reclaims the child and channels the Churail's fury, bringing the Dorrington line to ruin. The curse breaks — or so it seems. The fellowship is shattered, the manor reduced to a husk, and Izzy emerges **TRANSFORMED**: scarred, awake, no longer willing to silence her past. In the final image, her eyes flicker white, and the faint echo of backwards footsteps reminds us that there is a part of the Churail inside her - inside us all. Our **GENERATIONAL TRAUMA**. The horror has not ended; it has evolved.

FRANCHISE - The Curse Unfolds

Each sequel of Leave Me Alone could delve into a different **DIASPORA's** entangled history with colonial trauma, filtered through supernatural folklore and horror.

One film might follow a Filipino-American climate activist who returns to her family's coastal hometown in the U.S, only to be haunted by visions of a vanishing island and stalked by a tikbalang, a horse-headed trickster spirit from Philippine myth—an omen of displacement tied to both **ANCESTRAL LOSS** and environmental collapse.

A spin-off series could explore the psyche of a British-Ghanaian museum archivist who begins to hallucinate an adze, a vampiric firefly-spirit from Ewe legend, after discovering that her institution is hiding looted artifacts; the line between restitution and possession blurs as the past demands a **RECKONING**.

A prequel film might be set in a quieter suburb of London, a French-Algerian speech therapist might begin to lose her own language after encountering a mute desert phantom—a h'rash—that surfaces when she uncovers her family's buried history of **ASSIMILATION** and **ERASURE** under French colonial rule.

Another film might unfold around a young Eritrean-American architecture student who, while interning on a neoclassical monument restoration in Washington, D.C., begins dreaming in the voice of a zār—a spirit tied to colonial resistance rituals—stirred by suppressed stories of **FORCED LABOUR** under Italian occupation.

In every chapter, the monster is not merely a source of fear, but a mirror held up to empire's lingering shadow: a way of naming what was forgotten, forbidden, or forcibly silenced. Through myth and memory, Leave Me Alone explores how horror—when refracted through diaspora—becomes a tool not just for **SURVIVAL**, but for **ANCESTRAL RETURN**.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

Leave Me Alone began as an 18-minute short film, produced as part of the prestigious NFTS x Prime Video Directors Workshop. The short has proven the appetite; the **FEATURE FILM** is where this story will truly erupt. It allowed me to tease the series' core themes, tone, and character dynamics in a concentrated form, an opportunity to test the show's voice and emotional impact on screen— the results have been incredibly encouraging.

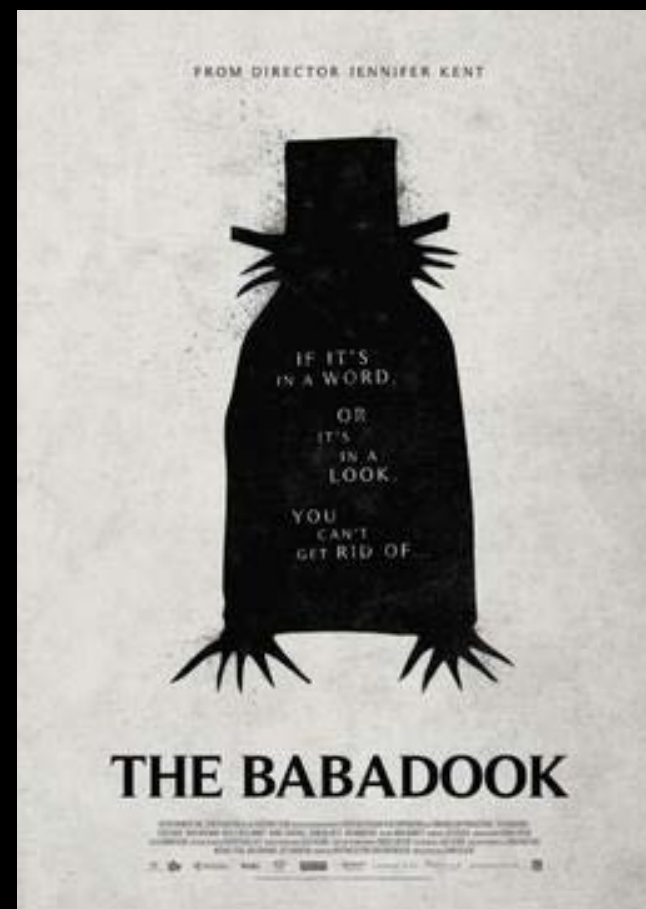
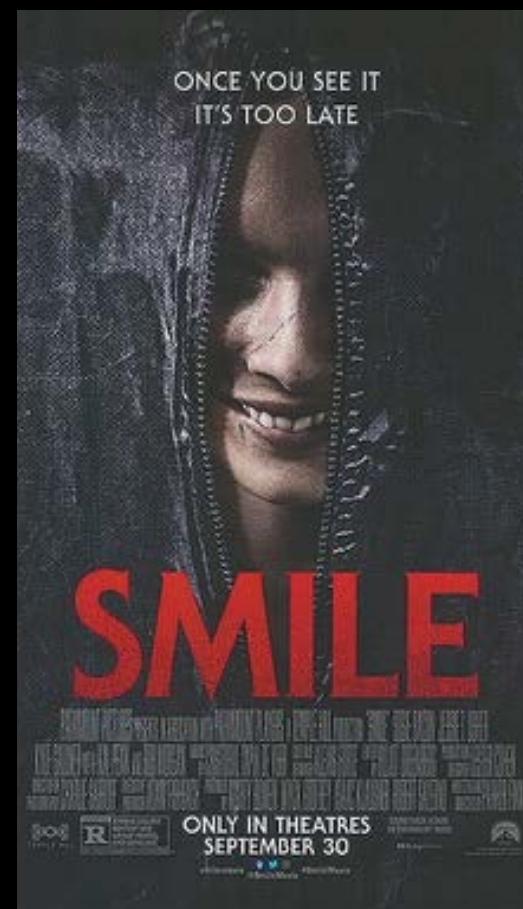
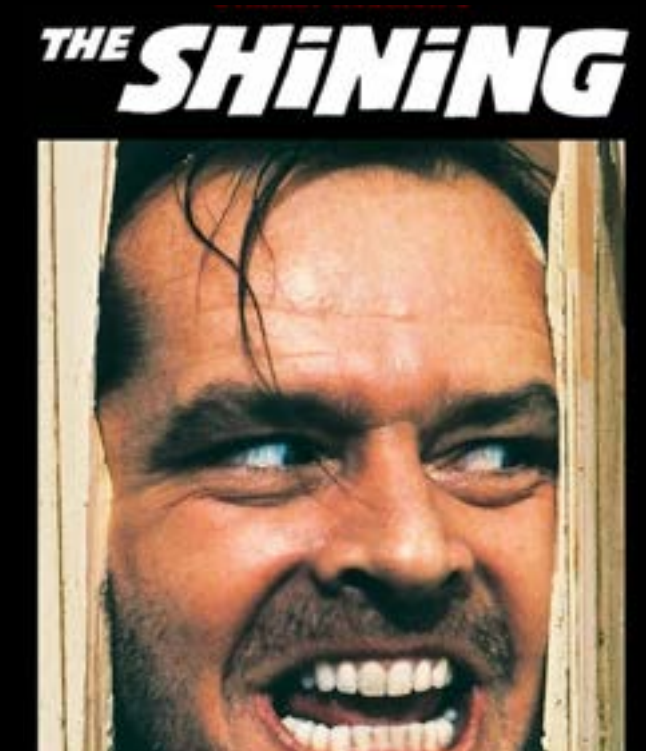
The short stars BAFTA-nominated actor Kiran Sonia Sawar, bringing depth and nuance to a character who is both vulnerable and razor-sharp. Her honest performance has anchored the story with a compelling, lived-in realism that speaks directly to the series' potential for longer form storytelling. It premieres at Tasveer Film Festival in Seattle, the world's only Oscar-qualifying South Asian Festival.

Blending folklore, psychological horror, and urgent contemporary themes, Leave Me Alone has all the ingredients of the next **BREAKOUT GENRE HIT**. This is not just a film for South Asian audiences — it's a universal, terrifying, and deeply human story that can resonate globally, just as Get Out, Talk To Me, and Weapons did. Backing this project means being part of a bold, original horror film that is primed to ignite conversation, captivate audiences, and deliver a **BOX OFFICE SENSATION**.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE SHORT FILM](#)



COMPARABLES



ABOUT THE WRITER & DIRECTOR



Shehroze Khan is a Writer/Director with a passion for character-driven films, and unique stories that can hold a mirror up to society. He was most recently 2nd Unit Director on SKY/AMC's Gangs of London, and just completed the NFTS Prime Video Director's Scheme. Awarded one of Broadcast Now's Hot Shots , Shehroze's films have won awards and screened at several OSCAR and BAFTA Qualifying Film Festivals including TriBeCa, Rhode Island, Flickerfest, Pan African, BronzeLens and many more. He has recently been commissioned 6 times to direct short dramas by Fully Focused Productions, directing the likes of David Harewood OBE (Homeland) and Fady Elsayed (Gangs of London) to make dramas that have scored hundreds of thousands of views online.

Currently represented by Curtis Brown, he previously worked as Director's Assistant to auteurs such as Marc Munden on the Sky/HBO series THE THIRD DAY, as well as Clio Barnard on her BBC Films feature, ALI & AVA and the Apple TV+ series, The Essex Serpent. Shehroze's scripts were shortlisted twice to be developed by the BBC Writer's Room as part of the Its My Shout scheme. Having been selected as one of Film London's Lodestars 2020, and previously on the BFI x BAFTA's Film/TV Crew 2018, he is an avid Film/TV enthusiast, loves going to the cinema and is currently pitching multiple series alongside seeking finance to get his debut feature - Leave Me Alone - off the ground.