

The Cost of Loving

Based on True Events

Directed by Anton Cobb & Todor Borganov

Written by Patrick Christopher Ehler & Paul Williams Donovan

A couple's daughter is abducted by a human trafficking organization, forcing them to confront the harrowing truth during the investigation that her adoption was based on forged documents.

The Cost of Loving

Genre: Drama, Documentary, Psychological Thriller

Type: Shortfilm

Runtime: 20 Minutes

Shooting Location: Bavaria (Germany) and Los Angeles (USA).

NEWS

[The Cost of Loving](#) was one of the selected projects with fellow 46 role-model projects and changemakers for sustainable development at the Future Award ([Zukunftspreis](#)) from the Office of Sustainability of the Capital City of Swabia Augsburg in Germany, supported by Sparkasse.

Synopsis

In *The Cost of Loving*, Alex and Lucas share a life filled with love and commitment, made brighter by their adopted daughter, Sofia. Their cozy family life is shaken when Sofie is abducted and a chilling secret: Sofia's adoption was orchestrated through a network of fraudulent documents, part of a larger scheme of human trafficking.

Inspired by true events, the film unflinchingly portrays the complexities of love, morality, and justice in the face of unthinkable loss with documentary elements. *The Cost of Loving* is a poignant exploration of how acts of love can carry unintended consequences, exploring a confrontation of our deepest values and the cost of our decisions. It serves as a powerful reminder of the strength required to seek redemption and the courage to fight for justice.

Theme

In response to the rising number of humanitarian crises and conflicts around the world, and the devastating increase in human and child trafficking, we imagined a world where the fight against these atrocities is no longer fragmented.

In the world of this film lies the creation of an in-universe institution: the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking. A fictional organ, rooted in real-world collaborations, built from the hope that prevention, protection, and justice can be swift, human-centered, and unhindered by bureaucracy.

This film is our artistic response to the global call for action. It is a contribution in the form of a short motion picture to the growing movement demanding that human dignity be placed above politics, endless red tape, and layers of indifference.

The Cost of Loving



Directed

by

Anton Cobb & Todor Barganov

Director's Statement

'The Cost of Loving is an investigation of how much we are willing to pay for love, to pay to be able to love someone, or even to receive. It is a reflection on the bonds we build and the unexpected ways our fragile nature can be tested. We wanted to question if what we do is too much or sometimes not enough. Telling it through a story that captures not only the gentle moments but also the shadows it casts when truth and morality come into conflict. With The Cost of Loving we decided to call attention to these real, documented, and painful truths in a fictionalized and stylized short film.'

- Anton Cobb & Todor Borganov

Anton Cobb and Todor Barganov

Anton Cobb, born in New York City, currently lives and works as a Creative Director in Berlin. He has established himself in the fashion industry through styling and creative direction for international publications ranging from Vogue to Interview Magazine. He has collaborated with a wide array of celebrities, including Glenn Close, Willem Dafoe, Whitney Houston, and Matthias Schweighöfer. Anton shapes visual identities, characters, and spaces for motion pictures that explore themes of identity, culture, and time.

Todor Barganov is a bulgarian filmmaker who lives in Munich, and Sofia. He studied at Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'. He is the Managing Art Director of Studio Karakashyan, where he produces and directs films and artistic projects to develop rising artists.

Cast and Crew

The Cost of Loving is directed by Anton Cobb and Todor Barganov. The screenplay is written by Patrick Christopher Ehler and Paul Williams Donovan, with a story based on true events. To protect the safety of those involved, the identities of the individuals whose stories inspired the film remain anonymous.

Patrick Christopher Ehler and Inga Fabian serve as producers. Edward Horsky is the director of photography, and Todor Barganov and Oksana Ivanchenko lead the production design. Costumes and set design were curated by Anton Cobb. Danni "Gray" Ma took over the production of the in-universe TV segments shot in Los Angeles directed by Xiangwu Xie.

The music is composed by Chrisna Lungala, including the original score titled *Fateful Decision* and *The Cost of Loving*. The complemented music is performed by the Goldmund Quartett, featuring Franz Schubert's *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, *Streichquartett in D-Moll, D. 810 (I. Allegro)*, and *Schwanengesang, D. 957, No. 4 - Ständchen*.

The cast features Zoe Pönisch as Sofia Zeitler, Patrick Christopher Ehler as Alex Zeitler, Paul Williams Donovan as Lucas Zeitler, Margit Mägdefrau as Freja Lindberg, Michelle Shapa as Katarina Romanova, and Oleksandr Petrenko as the Ice Cream Seller. Special appearances include, Zora Pavlovic (Superior at Fed. Dept. of Anti Human Trafficking) spoken by Katharina Morhankova, Doris Meier as The Mother, Kexy as The Doggie, and Barry Hickey as the voice of Mark.

The in-universe TV production, directed by Xiangwu Xie and written by Zerui Qin, features Sebastian Son as Carlos, Ros Fiol as Javier, Rhett Stuart as the Interviewer, Vibha Kulkarni as Anjali, Sabina F. Toth as Elena, Vanessa Nottingham as Irina, Liam Anderson as Alaxandru, and Yana Roykhman as the Mother.

Studios involved in the production include GMW Studio and Studios Ingolstadt in Germany, and Aha Lava in Los Angeles, USA. The film's In-Universe script was guided by a

scientific advisory board for sensitive language, featuring Prof. Dr. Gilda Scarfe from the Harvard Flourishing Program and Prof. Dr. Gwenn Hiller from the University of Applied Sciences HdBA. Writer - Zerui Qin

Studios

Studio Space Germany - GMW Studio, Germany, Studio Space Los Angeles - AHA Lava, USA. Pre-production consultancy was provided by Stephen C. Linder and Marcel Cornelius.

Behind the Scenes

Filmed over three weeks in Munich, and Los Angeles, *The Cost of Loving* showcases the unwavering commitment of its cast and crew. The maze sequence for a cornerstone of the film was crafted to symbolize the emotional labyrinth experienced by Alex and Lucas. From In-Universe crafted documents, photographs, and computer files to carefully selected costumes, props, and set designs, no element was overlooked.

Budget

This film was created solemnly by partnerships and was made possible entirely through the generous sponsorship of our partners and studios. In response to the global call to action, and amid rising humanitarian crises and conflicts fueling human trafficking, this project stands as our contribution as artists to amplify awareness, spark dialogue, and advocate for urgent change.

The Cost of Loving was created as an artistic response to the Call to Action issued by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), addressing the rising threat of human trafficking amidst global humanitarian crises and conflicts.

Contact Information

Patrick Christopher Ehler (Producer)

Inga Fabian (Producer)

Email: thecostofloving@icloud.com