



RUSE

A film by Rhea Shukla



LOGLINE

On a rainy afternoon, somewhere between innocence and awareness, three adolescent girls find themselves in the middle of a dance that takes on a life of its own.

SYNOPSIS

On a rainy afternoon, Kavya (14) and Tara (10) idle away at their friend Revati's (14) house. With Revati's mother away, the afternoon stretches on as the three girls play hide-and-seek and later rummage through their friend's mother's dressing table, finding lipsticks and jewels - wanting to catapult themselves into womanhood.

When they begin rehearsing for a dance, the proximity of their bodies urges forth a sense of desire that they don't yet have words for.





ARTIST STATEMENT

This project draws its inspiration from my first memory of keeping a secret. On a hot Delhi afternoon, as I played 'house' with two friends, we became aware of a certain closeness to our bodies, a physical curiosity. We shared a look and in that moment, we were dangling somewhere between innocence and awareness. While all of us walked away knowing that this would remain a secret, what followed was a sense of shame.

It urged me to explore what desire looks like when it is pursued in hiding. By creating this film I am hoping for women to forgive their own memories of shame and know that they are not alone. I hope to see people talk about the messy moments in which they stumbled upon sexuality with compassion instead of guilt.



RHEA SHUKLA

Rhea Shukla is an Indian writer and director based between New York and India. Her work delves into themes of gender, sexuality, and identity. Rhea is driven by an enduring curiosity with people —the choices they make, the emotions that drive them, and the lasting memories that shape who they are. This fascination lies at the heart of her creative practice.

Currently pursuing her Masters of Fine Arts in Screenwriting and Directing from Columbia University in the City of New York, Rhea's collaborations include serving as a creative producer for *Madhu*, a narrative short film that premiered at Rotterdam and Lincoln Center's MoMA and won a Special Mention Jury Award at Palm Springs. She also directed *I wanna be like you*, a music video for Ora the molecule, which won the best music video at the Drunken Film Festival Oakland in 2023.

Presently Rhea is working on developing her first feature film *Rafugiri (Darning)*- a surreal narrative set in 1990's Delhi in which a mother's unfulfilled love from the past transcends space and time, finding new life through her daughter's present.

A cinematic still from a film. In the center, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and shorts, stands in a white-framed arched doorway, looking out at a lush green landscape. The interior is dimly lit. To the left, a large, dark wooden pendulum clock hangs on the wall. In the foreground, a dining table is partially visible, covered with a white tablecloth and set with glasses and a pitcher. To the right, a dark wooden cabinet and a framed portrait are visible. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

PRIMARY CREDITS

Writer/Director: **Rhea Shukla**

Cinematographer: **Tanmay Chowdhary**

Editor: **Anupam Sinha Roy**

Producer: **Aanchal Vimla Pugalia**

Sound Design: **Sukrit Sen**

Production House: **Peru Films**

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's legs and feet. The person is standing on a wet, textured surface that looks like a stone or brick walkway. The ground is dark and reflective, with some small puddles. The person's legs are dark-skinned, and they are wearing a dark, patterned garment. Their feet are also dark-skinned and are positioned on the wet surface. The overall mood is somber and artistic.

TECH SPECS

DURATION: **09:32**

LANGUAGE: **Hindi**

ASPECT RATIO: **1.90**

SOUND: **5.1**

Output: **DCP**

Subtitles: **English**

Year of production: **2025**



CONTACT

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