



# **LIBERATION: THE USER'S GUIDE**

A FILM BY ALEXANDER KUZNETSOV

Jury Prize & Most Innovative Feature Film Prize  
2016 Visions du Réel

John Marshall Award for Contemporary Ethnographic Media  
2016 Camden International Film Festival

An Icarus Films Release



# SYNOPSIS

Residents at the Tinkoi Psychoneurological Institute in Siberia have modest dreams: to find love and have children-to live independently and pay their own bills. But many may never attain even these simple goals.

LIBERATION: THE USER'S GUIDE is a striking vérité documentary that follows the long struggle of two inmates at the institution. Like many of their fellow residents, they have spent much of their lives here-abandoned by their mothers, raised with little access to vital therapy and programs, and caught in an impersonal bureaucracy that prevents them from taking control of their own lives.

The film follows Yulia and Katia as they fight to regain their civil capacity, the legal standing that would give them independence. Well-meaning staff speak of the women, who have cognitive impairments, as though they are children (Yulia is 34) and encourage them to think positively. But nice clothes, makeup, and a good first impression are not going to earn Yulia and Katia their release.

When Katia asks a psychiatrist who barely knows her how her civil capacity could have been removed in her absence, he says, "I'm just a doctor." Meanwhile, judges tend to rely on doctors' reports in making their decisions-which they deliver in a barking monotone without ever looking the person whose fate they are ruling on in the eye.

Four years after her original application is denied, Yulia remains at the institution, a sad and faraway look in her eyes as she goes through the routines of daily life, improves her skills as a cook, and prepares to petition the court again. Heartbreakingly, Katia asks a psychologist administering cognitive tests, "Do I stand a chance?"

LIBERATION: THE USER'S GUIDE offers a rare and intimate look inside a system that imprisons people with mental illness and cognitive disabilities, forcing them to meet nearly impossibly high standards for release. "I'm so tired," Katia sighs at one point. "Why does it have to be so difficult?"

# FILM FESTIVALS

Interreligious Prize & Jury Prize for Most Innovative Feature Film,  
2016 Visions du Réel

Winner, John Marshall Award for Contemporary Ethnographic Media,  
2016 Camden International Film Festival

Nominee, 2016 European Film Awards

2016 Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de Buenos Aires

2016 Guth Gafa International Documentary Festival

2016 Human Rights Film Festival, Lithuania

2016 Seville International Film Festival

2016 Trieste Film Festival



# FILM CREDITS

**Film title** "Liberation: The User's Guide"

**Alternate titles** "We'll Be Alright"; "Bref Manuel de libération"

**Written and directed** by Alexander Kuznetsov

**Director of photography** Alexander Kuznetsov

**Sound engineer** Alexander Kalachnikov

**Edited by** Alexander Abaturov

**Color grading** Paul Champart

**Sound editing** Jeanne Delplanca

**Mixing** Nathalie Vidal

**Produced by** Rebecca Houzel, assisted by Bérangère Dugué

**Production** Petit à Petit Production

**In coproduction with** InThemood, Hugues Landry and Laurent Roth

**Supported by** CNC, Avance sur recette

Watch the trailer: <https://youtu.be/-yJ-ZMDUajl>

More information: <http://icarusfilms.com/new2016/libe.html>

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