

REASON8 FILMS presents Raymond St-Jean's

# VEINS



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## **Synopsis**

Isabelle is stunned when she arrives home for the weekend to discover her father has been three days dead and buried. Weirdly, her mother cannot understand why she is upset, nor can Isabelle make sense of her mother's alarming fascination with the new neighbors.

### **Long Synopsis (for internal use only)**

Isabelle had been estranged from her parents since she came out to them but is now driving up to introduce her girlfriend, Catherine. Cell phone service is lost as they arrive in the burnt-out forest town of St. Etienne.

Isabelle's mother, Thérèse, had forgot that she was to visit. She also neglected to tell Isabelle her father, Maurice, had died suddenly three days earlier. His ashes were buried at the foot of the old tree Ancestor. Also, the family dog, Fiston, had disappeared. Isabelle fears her mother is not well, for being so unemotional relating all the bad news.

Dr. Toupin had served the community for many years before taking off to travel the world then return to live in the house next door with his botanist wife, Maria. They set up a lab in the cellar to pursue secretive research on his new way for humankind to bond eternally with the earth.

Maurice had some time earlier sought Dr. Toupin's treatment for pain, which proved to be effective. Isabelle visits her uncle Emile to learn his son Charles recently died, after being under Toupin's care. Emile urges Isabelle to leave St. Etienne right away; and Thérèse is panic stricken when Isabelle sees Catherine off and stays on to take care of her.

Therese sleepwalks and is generally detached during the day. One afternoon, she drops her garden hose to dart over to the doctor's house, where Maurice is not dead but bedridden in the late stages of transition from flesh and blood to fertile earth substance. Maria is also being transitioned.

When Isabelle discovers her mother is also being treated by Dr. Toupin, she confronts him, only to be dismissed. Isabelle is soon targeted by the doctor.

## **Director's Notes**

### **Inspiration**

Following our first collaboration on the film *Dusk for a Hitman* (2023), writer Martin Girard and I shared the urge to write another thriller, this time in the horror genre. We started by agreeing that we would avoid the most overused themes of the genre, such as vampires and zombies. We also resolved to begin writing only after we had a fresh, original idea—something we had never seen told elsewhere. Although there may be situations and images in *Veins* that are variations on conventional horror, we believe this work sets out on original terrain. Even as we respected certain genre conventions, we aimed at surprising the audience by taking the story where they least expected it to go. We aimed at embracing the grammar of the genre, blending horror and poetry, and exploring themes such as the mystery of life, the relationship between humans and nature, and life after death. Horror afforded us the opportunity to shake up the audience emotionally, even as it provokes serious thought.

### **Preparation**

*Veins* is an original screenplay that Martin and I worked on closely together. The several-year process allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the story's themes and the characters' psychology long before filming began. One of my contributions to the script was to incorporate ideas for staging and to define the moods that would later guide the work of the film crew. As Martin and I share a similar cinematic culture, our discussions often reference films we love, like Mario Bava's *Black Sabbath*, Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*, or John Carpenter's *The Thing*.

Since the entire film rests on an ensemble of eight actors, each had to be perfectly chosen to match their character. I have always found auditions simultaneously stimulating and nerve-wracking. I wait for that moment when an actor brings a spark of life to the role, when the character becomes embodied in alignment with my vision. But that vision is never completely clear until the actors actually take on the role and surprise me with their performances. When that click happens, I know immediately that I've found the right person and that the actor will help the character grow and continue to surprise me. It's a very intuitive process; and I'm always ready to embrace the actors' contributions. For example, the character Maria was originally English in our script. At the audition, I asked Anana Rydval to improvise a scene in Swedish, a language she speaks fluently. I immediately saw the character come to life before my eyes. Maria became Swedish, and several lines of dialogue were translated to transform the character.

When Marie-Thérèse Fortin came to read for the role of Thérèse, it was obvious to me that she had seriously prepared her audition and already had a deep understanding of the character. She was a natural fit for the role. For the part of Isabelle, we met around thirty of the best young actresses working in Montreal. We were looking for someone who could show vulnerability but also strength when confronted with adversity. Romane Denis impressed me with her sensibility and intelligence, but also with her strong character, which enabled her to impose herself in confrontational scenes.

For me, the choice of filming locations is almost as important as the choice of actors. Veins was shot on location in Montreal and the Laurentides area. I consider the sets to be characters in themselves. In that regard, I provide very specific images to the location manager, who worked with precise parameters that corresponded to the atmospheres I wanted to create and certain staging ideas I had already had in mind. Of course, many technical factors influence the choice of a location, but the main thing I was looking for was a location that would inspire the production designer and the director of photography. The Veins team is made up of both long-time and new collaborators. This choice was made with producer Nicolas Comeau's input, based on the specific needs of the script.

## **At Work**

Veins was shot in 28 days, which demanded meticulous preparation. My motto is that in preparation nothing is left to chance so that chance accidents can be seized upon as creative opportunities. Several scenes in Veins feature complex makeup and special effects. The preparation for these scenes was very intensive. They had been storyboarded and painstakingly prepared with the creative team, under the supervision of first assistant director Éric Parenteau and prosthetic makeup artist Bruno Gatien.

On set, my approach was intuitive, mixing rigour with flexibility. Since I am also an editor and have an eye for precise editing, I had a very clear idea of what footage I needed to shoot. I anticipated the editing of scenes while filming them and tried to shoot only what will be useful to the narrative and to enhance emotional impact. Every shot had to have a function, had to be significant if it were to make the film's final cut.

I worked with a summary shot list that evolved as we set up each day's work. I was open to suggestions from the actors and collaborators if I felt they could enhance my vision. At every stage of production and post-production, I tried to leave room for invention.

Working with actors is a source of immense joy. I made sure to give them as much time and space as possible to explore the dimensions of each scene. I was lucky enough to work on *Veins* with talented and passionate actors. Thanks to these performers, the director's job was similar to that of a conductor. Each person knew their part and had mastered their instrument. My role was to help the performers reach their full potential while preserving the integrity of my overall vision.

*Veins* includes complex character transformations into monstrous creatures. Very early in the production, we chose to create the majority of these special effects on set with prosthetic makeup by the Avatar FX team, led by Bruno Gatien. This approach presented many challenges during filming and required great generosity from the actors. The result is so realistic and rich in emotion I felt the 'monsters' came alive on screen - in large part thanks to the live performances rendered in makeup. Some actors, like Anana Rydvald, had to spend up to six hours in the make-up chair to get ready to shoot. For all the cast, working with heavy prosthetics was a first. Despite the discomfort, they enjoyed it and eagerly explored the new possibilities of acting with altered features. VFX, produced by the Alchemy 24 team in post-production, added a welcome magical and luminous dimension to the prosthetic makeup

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

**Raymond St-Jean** is a Canadian film director, screenwriter, editor, and multimedia designer, known for a versatile body of work spanning narrative film, documentary, music video and performing arts cinema. After studying communication at the Université du Québec à Montréal, he began his creative journey directing music videos and short films, eventually branching into feature films like *Dusk for a Hitman* (2023) and *Veins* (2025), as well as acclaimed documentaries such as *A Chair Fit for an Angel* and *Louise Lecavalier – In Motion*. His work has been celebrated in Canada and abroad, and he has also designed multimedia projections for productions such as Cirque du Soleil's Zaia and Zarkana.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCER

**Nicolas Comeau** is a Montréal-based Canadian film producer and founder of 1976 Productions, recognized for championing bold and original voices in contemporary cinema. With a career spanning collaborations across Canada and abroad his productions have garnered international attention, including François Rotger's “*Story of Jen*” (2008), a co-production with France, that had its world premiere in main competition of the Locarno Film Festival; Srinath Samarasinghe's “*A Cloud in a Glass of Water*” (2012), also a co-production with France, that premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival in January 2012; Bruce La Bruce's “*Gerontophilia*” (2013) that had its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival (Giornate degli Autori) and its North American premiere at TIFF in 2013; Cristian Jimenez's “*Voix Off*” (2014), a co-production with Chile and France, that had its world premiere at TIFF and its international premiere in main competition of the San Sebastian Film Festival. Bruce La Bruce's “*Saint-Narcisse*” (2020), which premiered as the closing film of Giornate degli Autori at the Venice IFF and won the Graffetta d'Oro Prize; Nicolas Roy's “*Wars*” (2021), which screened in competition at the Karlovy Vary IFF, where Éléonore Loiselle received the Best Actress award; and Katherine Jerkovic's “*Coyote*” (2022), that premiered at TIFF. Comeau continues to play a vital role in bringing distinctive Québec and Canadian stories to global audiences.

## ABOUT THE CAST

**Romane Denis** is a Canadian actress recognized for her versatility across film, television, and voice performance in both French and English. She gained early acclaim for her role as Mégane in *Slut in a Good Way (Charlotte a du fun)* (2018), earning a Prix Iris nomination for Revelation of the Year and a Canadian Screen Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress. Her screen credits include *The G* (2023), *Slaxx* (2020) among others, and she has expanded into video game voice work as Nikki Gold in *Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy*.

**Sylvain Marcel** is a Canadian actor acclaimed for his extensive work in film and television. He is widely recognized for his performance as Luc Therrien in the hit bilingual crime comedy *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* (2006) and its sequel, and for his César-nominated role as Guy-Claude Kamar in Valérie Lemercier's *Aline* (2020) that premiered at Cannes Film Festival in 2021. His screen career also includes notable appearances in series such as *Mensonges* (2014-2018). With a career defined by versatility and depth, Marcel has established himself as a leading figure in contemporary Québec and Canadian screen storytelling.

**Marie-Thérèse Fortin** is a distinguished Canadian actress whose career spans film, television and theatre. A graduate of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique du Québec, she began her professional life on stage in Québec before moving into screen roles. Among her notable film credits are *Sans elle* (2006) and *Les Grandes Chaleurs* (2009). On television, she is widely known for series such as *Le Monde de Charlotte* and *Mémoires vives*. In addition to her acting work, she also served as artistic director of Théâtre du Trident and was co-artistic director of Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. Her honours include three Gémeaux Awards, the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and a Mérite d'honneur en education.

## THE CAST

Romane Denis - *Isabelle*

Marie-Thérèse Fortin - *Therese Tremblay*

Richard Fréchette - *Maurice Tremblay*

Sylvain Marcel - *Hubert Toupin*

Anana Rydvald - *Maria*

## THE CREW

**Director** - Raymond St-Jean

**Writers** - Martin Girard, Raymond St-Jean

**Producer** - Nicolas Comeau

**Cinematographer** - Jean-François Lord

**Editors** - Matthieu Laclau, Yann-Shan Tsai, Raymond St-Jean

**Art Director** - Marie-Hélène Lavoie

**Costume Designer** - Oleksandra Lykova

**Sound Designer** - Benoît Dame

**Composer** - Serge Nakauchi Pelletier

## TECH SPECS

Running Time: **96 min**

Aspect Ratio: **1.85**

Sound: **5.1**

Shooting Format: **Digital, Color**

Language: **French**

Production Country: **Canada**

Production Company: **1976 Productions**



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