

THE TRIUMPH

Written by

Tom Dickinson

Based on, 'O Triunfo' by Clarice Lispector

PLAYERS:

LUÍSA, a brunette middle-aged woman

HUSBAND, a middle-aged stocky man

SETTING:

Domestic life, 1940s, in a cottage on the countryside.

PLOT:

Shot on 16mm. 4:3 aspect ratio. Through the bedroom window of a 1950s country cottage, we find our protagonist Luísa, a gorgeous southern European woman in her early thirties.

Everything has stood still since yesterday, the day her husband left to never come back. She has become estranged from the place that should supposedly feel familiar- Home.

Luísa spends the day trying to distract herself from reality, but her thoughts always circle back to him. She realises that she must move on. She must find meaning elsewhere.

NOTE:

This film must be photographed on 16mm film or emulated to look like 16mm film:

- o Kodak VISION3 200T Colour Negative Film 7213 for scenes 1-17.
- o Kodak VISION3 50D Colour Negative Film 7203 for scenes 18-26.
- o Kodak VISION3 250D Colour Negative Film 7207 might be used for interiors
- o The Éclair ALR 16mm camera will be used

Aspect ratio: 1.33:1 (4:3) or 1.66:1

Audio Mix: Stereo

OVER BLACK FILM:

OPENING CREDITS (MESHERS OF THE AFTERNOON)

"A FILM BY TOM DICKINSON, MELBOURNE 2024"

"MUSIC BY JACK FINGLAND"

"CAST, LUISA, HUSBAND"

"THE TRIUMPH, BASED ON THE SHORT STORY BY CLARICE LISPECTOR"

FADE IN:

A grandfather clock strikes nine, a LOUD, SONOROUS PEAL,
followed by GENTLE CHIMING, an ECHO. Then, SILENCE.

1

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE COTTAGE GARDEN - MORNING

1

Sweet spring birds SING their songs...

... the leaves RUSTLE gently in the breeze...

...the bees go BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZING, flitting from flower to flower...

All the while, the bright stain of sunlight stretches little by little across the lawn, eventually climbing up the red wall of the house, making the ivy glisten with a thousand dewy lights.

The sunlight slips through an open window, taking possession of the room, where we find-

2

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - MORNING

2

LUÍSA (27), motionless, sprawled atop the tangled sheets. Her hair fanned over the pillow. An arm here, another there-crucified by lassitude.

Morning light filters through the lace curtains, casting soft patterns on the ceiling.

She blinks, slow, eyes yawning open. Her gaze drifts upward, settling on the dance of light above.

From the window ajar- DRY LEAVES CRUNCHING UNDERFOOT.

She Stiffens. *It couldn't be, could it?*

She throws off the covers, rushes to the window...

...only to find two children playing in the neighboring garden.

She SLAMS the window shut, yanks the curtains closed, and returns to bed.

A SILENCE fills the room.

Luísa amuses herself listening to the SILENCE. It is absolute, like the sound of death.

She props her pillow up. Leans back. Her eyes widen, a shiver courses through her body.

She casts a sweeping glance around the room, inevitably settling on the empty spot in bed next to her.

She tilts her head back, eyes closed, slipping into memory- We begin to see what she sees.

DOUBLE EXPOSURE
TO:

3

FLASHBACK - INT.KITCHEN - NIGHT - POV

3

HUSBAND(30s), back turned, hunched over the sink. Bags gather at his feet.

HUSBAND
I can't keep doing this.

He turns, looking directly at us, SIGHS, a regretful sadness in his eyes.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)
I love you Luísa but I can't keep doing this. Your presence suffocates me. How can I possibly write anything with you haunting my every step. I tried, I really did. For you, I gave everything I had, but it never seems to be enough. You take and take with no thought towards the toll it will have on me.

(beat)
I cannot do it any longer. I can't keep being the only thing that holds you up. You must learn to...

His voice drowns out, fading into distance.

LUISA (V.O)
If he leaves, I'll die.

He grabs the bags. Walks out. SLAMS the door

LUISA (V.O.)
I'll die.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

Luísa's eyes snap open. She throws back the covers. Rushes for the door.

4 **INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

4

Luísa sits at the table, knees hugged tight to her chest, head resting on top.

Waiting.

Her eyes fixed on the place she last saw him-

5 **THE DOOR**

5

Silence, stretched thin. Infinite.

Luísa chews her nails.

PRE-LAP - A KNIFE HITS A CHOPPING BOARD.

SMASH CUT TO:

6 **INT. KITCHEN - LATER**

6

Luísa stands at the counter, lifelessly dicing for a basic stew. Having already diced the onion, she starts on the mushrooms.

She places a heavy-bottomed pot on the stove. Drops in butter, onion, mushroom. Flicks the fan on.

A faint monotonous WHIRRING fills the air.

Luísa not bothering about peeling the vegetables or if they are cut different sizes, begins slicing carrots, celery, and a pumpkin

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP.

WHIRR. WHIRR. WHIRR.

She falls into a steady rhythm. Almost musical. Almost soothing.

She unconsciously begins to HUM, a low tune, matching the fan's dull drone.

Her HUMMING falters as she glances towards-

The DOOR.

A beat.

She finds the bleak tune again. Adds stock to the pot. Then takes a seat and waits until it boils.

A quiet SIMMER. A faint WHIRLING. The rhythm of nothing.

She scans the kitchen. Stands. Checks the pot, and sure enough it's still SIMMERING.

She sits again

But can't help it, another glance toward-

THE DOOR. Silence slowly swallows all sound.

SMASH CUT TO:

7 **INT. KITCHEN SINK - LATER**

7

Luísa methodically washes a dirty small bowl and cutlery just for one.

She dries them with care.

8 **INT KITCHEN - SAME TIME**

8

She finishes. Then excessively wipes her hands down the thighs of her dress

A pause.

What now?

An uneasiness fills Luísa's face.

SILENCE, then-

A faint TICKING of the clock. Insistent. Inescapable.

Her eyes drift to THE DOOR, becoming spellbound by it.
And then suddenly, like a dart, wounding sharp and deep:

LUÍSA (V.O.)
(quietly)
He's not coming back.

THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE

A LOUD, SONOROUS PEAL, followed by GENTLE CHIMING. Then a bird lets out a PIERCING CRY.

INT. STUDY - MIDDAY

The study lies dark. Still. Untouched.
Luísa eases the door open. Steps inside.
She pulls the curtains wide, flooding the room with light.
she scans the room as if it's a foreign land. Unfamiliar.
She hesitates. Then crosses to the desk. *His* desk.
She rifles through drawers, old newspapers, anything for traces of him. Eventually she finds-

An OLD JOURNAL

She sits in his chair. Opens it at random.

HUSBAND V.O:
I've been sitting here for two
solid hours and still can't focus.
There are so many distractions in
this house, it's driving me crazy.

CAMERA BEGINS TO SLOWLY PAN AWAY FROM LUÍSA, MOVING TOWARD
THE WINDOW-

HUSBAND V.O: (CONT'D)
One moment, there are children
screaming in the streets. The next,
Luísa's asking me some stupid
question about whether i'm happy
here. What's there to be happy
about? I feel like this marriage...

SLAM. She shuts the journal.

WHIP PAN BACK TO LUÍSA STANDING, JOURNAL SHUT IN HER HANDS.

LUÍSA (V.O.)
(murmurs feebly)
Jorge... how could you- Why did you-
What...

Her inner voice is cut off by the sound of her crying---

She leans against the wall and silently cries, she cries until she feels limp, letting herself slide down the wall.

9

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

9

Luísa marches to the sink.

She splashes her face with cold water. Pins her hair up. Scrubs at her skin with soap until it's taut, shiny, flushed.

She looks at herself in the mirror. For a moment she resembles a girl much younger than her years

She reaches for the lipstick-pauses-remembers. She no longer needs it.

10

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

10

The dining room lay in darkness. Humid, stuffy, still.

Luísa throws opens the window and halts in surprise. Light floods in all at once. A rush of air swiftly enters, touching everything.

So much is now charming about this room. Even the dust feels golden.

Through the window- the trees sway with sudden life, as if they've been waiting.

She leans out the window. Looks left. Then right. The outside world almost feels like a new discovery.

11

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE - DAY

11

Luisa carries a basket of clothes to the side of the house, where a large outdoor sink waits in the sun.

She rolls up her sleeves and starts scrubbing everything with soap.

Bent over, arms moving vehemently. She bites her lower lip from the effort, feeling the strong pulse of blood throughout her body. The effort surprises her.

She stops a moment, unfurrows her brow. Stands up, eyes fixed ahead.

A sweet breeze lifts the hairs on her neck.

The work has warmed her.

She glances at the spigot, clear water gushing from its mouth.

A thought. A flicker. An idea.

She begins to undress. Clothes fall from frame. First the blouse. Then the rest. Until she stands bare under the sun.

She opens the spigot- full force, and without hesitation, steps beneath it.

The cold water courses over her body. She SHRIEKS, then LAUGHS, giddy from the shock, the pleasure, the purity of it.

Her improvised bathtub takes in a marvelous view of the countryside stretching before her, beneath an already blazing sun.

For a moment she becomes serious, still, lost in thought. The water cascades down her body, noisily clamoring for her attention

Then, a smile. Something dawns- THE TRIUMPH.

She looks around at the perfect day, breathing deeply and feeling, almost with pride, her heart beating steadily and full of life.

She BELLY LAUGHS. Loud. Free. She no longer cares if he comes back.

A warm ray of sunshine envelopes her, then fills the frame entirely.

FADE TO SUNSHINE

MUSIC BEGINS OVER BLACK: Instrumental of "Change" by Big Thief

FADE IN:

12

MONTAGE – LUÍSA'S REBIRTH

12

- The clock strikes nine, soft and lingering. The sound, once a harbinger of loneliness now rings clear and bright.
- LUÍSA'S BEDROOM, Sunlight dances through the lace curtains. A vase of fresh flowers sits on the nightstand.
- KITCHEN, Golden light spills across polished wooden countertops.
- STUDY, Luísa sits, writing a letter. The window ajar.

LUÍSA (V.O.)

I am telling myself the story of my life. Stranger than song or fiction.

(beat)

I cannot start with the joyful mysteries before the appearance of him, trying to capture the elusive... All I know is that for years I was waiting for life to start.

- OUTDOOR GARDEN, Bushes and trees sway in a gentle wind.

LUÍSA (V.O.)

At first I didn't notice him, the colour of his heart, or his desire to own. I was tying my shoelace or finding the pavement fascinating, when man's fatal comet thrills the sky. Fortunately for him, I unknowingly had all the necessary elements, but it was the combination that alluded me.

(beat)

Forgive me, I was sleep walking. .
 . jangling to the sounds of his songs. Meanwhile, I have learnt there is a real world and it was happening all along. Trains are late, doctors are breaking bad news, but I have been living in a lullaby.

- FRONT DOORWAY, Luísa enters frame, wearing a sundress, suitcases in both hands.

She pauses next to the door. Sets them down. Takes her hat from the hanger.

She opens the door, picks up the bags, steps out, leaving the door open behind her.

We watch as she walks away, never once looking back.

LUÍSA (V.O.)

If I was dizzy, I called it rapture. If I was low, I would attribute it to his absence, noting his tidal effects upon my moods. Oblivious to the opinions of others, I would bark at the moon like a dog... You gave me nothing... then you took it all away.

(beat)

I understand now that this was the aftermath of fever. Only by an extreme act of will can I avoid becoming a character in a country song.

(a few beats)

Going forward, there are two ways of looking at this. The first is to accept that he is gone and to light a candle at the shrine of amnesia. There is of course, the other way of looking at this, and that is to tell the stars I'm coming. Tell them to leave a space for me. Whether bones, ashes, or dust, once among them I'll be free. I don't want to follow the course, from chaos to art. Desire the horse, depression the cart. This may make a glamorous life for you but it's a dark train of thought for me with too many carriages.

We move with her, drifting slowly through the doorway. As the camera glides forward—

THE ASPECT RATIO BEGINS TO WIDEN - shifting from 1.33:1 to 1.66:1 (or 16:9), as if the world itself feels wider than it ever has before.

LUÍSA (V.O CONT.)

I am telling myself the story of my life. So what if this is largely a bravado, women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting man at twice his size.

(MORE)

LUÍSA (V.O CONT.) (CONT'D)

It's inside myself that I must
create someone who will understand.

(a beat)

There is no gate, no bolt, no man
that you can set upon the freedom
of my mind. I have caught the scent
of apples, now I hunger for a
taste.

FADE TO BLACK.