



Presents

THE THINGS YOU KILL

A film by Alireza Khatami

113 mins, Canada, France, Poland, Turkey, 2025

Language: Turkish with English subtitles

Distribution

Mongrel Media Inc
1213C Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 3H3
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651
E-mail: info@mongrelmedia.com
www.mongrelmedia.com



@MongrelMedia

Publicity

Bonne Smith
Star PR
Tel: 416-488-4436
Twitter: @starpr2
E-mail: starpr@sympatico.ca



/MongrelMedia



THE THINGS YOU KILL

"Fascinatingly heady...Front to back, 'The Things You Kill' is an astutely written exercise in paying attention to how one is perceived and using that knowledge to rewrite one's own narrative... With 'The Things You Kill' Khatami turns in an absorbing and twisty take on introspection."

VARIETY

"If the opening half hour of The Things You Kill plays out like a slow-burn family saga reminiscent of the work of Nuri Bilge Ceylan... about a man experiencing a midlife crisis following the death of his mother, it veers into Buñuel or De Palma territory in the latter half. Identities are swapped, bodies are dropped and everything seems out of whack."

Hollywood
REPORTER

"Overtones of Kafka, Dostoevsky, Lynch, and Hitchcock... It's absorbing, suspenseful, and deeply moving — a case study in how to make an effective psychological thriller."

VULTURE



INDIEWIRE'S 2025 SUNDANCE CRITICS
SURVEY OF 176 CRITICS

—
#1 Best International Film
#5 Best Film
#4 Best Director
#3 Best Screenplay

A FILM BY ALIREZA KHATAMI



**INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS
& FESTIVALS (01/06/2025)**

- USA - Cineverse
- Canada - Mongrel
- France - Le Pacte
- Turkey - Bir Films
- Benelux - Mooov
- Spain - Filmin
- Taiwan - Filmware
- Greece - Danaos
- Ex Yugoslavia - Discovery
- India - Bookmyshow
- Indonesia - PT Falcon

Premiered in more than 30 international festivals including Sundance, Miami, Minneapolis, Seattle, SXSW London, Rotterdam, Sydney, Melbourne, Karlovy Vary, Durban...



SYNOPSIS

Haunted by the suspicious death of his ailing mother, Ali, a university professor coerces his enigmatic gardener to execute a cold-blooded act of vengeance. As long-buried family secrets resurface, the police tighten their noose, and doubts begin eroding his conscience. Ali has no choice but to look into the abyss of his own soul.



A CONVERSATION WITH ALIREZA KHATAMI

Director of *The Things You Kill*

What was the biggest inspiration behind this film?

The seed of this film was personal: a reckoning with the legacy of violence in my own family. But it's also the story of exile—what happens when you're cut off from your place of origin but still haunted by its echoes. *The Things You Kill* was born from the need to confront memory, history, and inheritance—not just as an artist, but as a émigré who found creative refuge in Canada. It's the kind of story that could only emerge from a life lived between worlds, where home becomes less a place than a vantage point.

As a Canadian-Iranian filmmaker setting your story in Turkey, how does this geographic and cultural translation influence the film's resonance?

The story began in Farsi and was originally set in Iran. But when censorship authorities

demanded I remove a central plot point—patricide—I realized I couldn't tell the story honestly under those constraints. Being from a Turkish-speaking minority gave me an organic bridge to relocate the story to Turkey, where I could preserve its cultural and political layers. But it was my life in Canada—and the artistic freedom it offers—that truly allowed this film to exist. Canada's multicultural foundation gives filmmakers like me the space to hold complexity, to make stories that aren't bound by borders. In that sense, this is not just a Turkish or Middle Eastern story—it's a Canadian one, in the most expansive and inclusive way.

Ali's relationships with his wife and father are central. How do they reflect each other?

Both relationships revolve around silence and protection. In each, Ali believes shielding others from truth is an act of care. But what's transformative is the difference in resolution—

where one relationship erupts in violence, the other opens toward healing.

There are strong visual and thematic motifs: water, ghosts, burial. How do they connect?

The way I see it, these motifs all connect to what lies beneath the surface - both literally and emotionally. How deep we have to go to find the truth, and how hungry are we for it? And you know what's interesting? When characters try to bury things - whether it's secrets or bodies - they always seem to resurface, like water finding its way up through the earth. The ghosts in the story aren't just supernatural - they're the buried truths that keep haunting us until we face them. It's all about what we hide and what we can't help but uncover.

You worked with a star-studded ensemble. How did you go about casting them, and what was your approach to working with the actors?

I feel incredibly fortunate about our cast. Every actor who joined us brought such depth to their roles - we're talking about some of the finest performers you can find around the world. There's this one scene with Ekin Koc - a confession scene that scared everyone. I wrote it after a personal psychedelic experience, and my producers were so shocked they gently asked me to cut it. When Ekin told me how terrified he was to perform it, I knew right then he was perfect for Ali. We were still figuring out how to shoot it right up until the day. Then I was reading Primo Levi, and something clicked about how he strips emotion from his darkest passages. When I suggested this to Ekin, he talked about needing privacy for the scene. So we used camera focus in this really delicate way - just me, Ekin, and the lens creating this private space. Everyone fought it at first. But sometimes the scariest choice ends up being the most beautiful one. That intimacy, that risk, is what the film demanded. And it's something I've come to recognize as essential to my work:



trusting actors to go deep, and crafting the environment where that's possible.

The film begins with a dream and ends in a nightmare. Was that deliberate?

Not at first. I started writing this story thinking I knew where the darkness lived - in the father's violence, in the family trauma. But as I followed Ali's journey, I realized the story was really about how we mirror the very things we're trying to escape. The blurring between reality and nightmare - it wasn't planned, but it emerged organically because that's how trauma works, isn't it? It bleeds across boundaries, makes us question who we really are. Having the narrative structure itself become like a mirror felt... honest somehow. Sometimes the deepest truths reveal themselves in the telling.

You return to questions about killing and the title is *The Things You Kill*? What are we talking about when we talk about killing?

When Ali teaches his students about translation - how the Arabic root 'Rajam' might mean 'to kill' - he's really talking about transformation. And what it takes to transform. We kill parts of ourselves to survive trauma. But what's crucial is understanding that violence has a history - it doesn't come from nowhere.

Hamit was beaten by his father, who was likely beaten by his father... So when we talk about killing, we're really talking about inheritance, about how violence gets passed down until someone finds a way to transform it.

In the film, the female characters appear stronger and determined than the men, while the latter compensate for their weaknesses and hesitations with violence. Is this your vision of man?

I wanted to examine how patriarchy keeps itself going through this deep fear of vulnerability. The system teaches everyone that vulnerability is something to be crushed rather than understood. In my film, while the women might seem emotionally stronger, they're just as caught up in this system - they've just found different ways to survive within it. I'm not really interested in sorting people into «strong» or «weak.» What intrigues me is how we all develop different strategies to exist under patriarchy. Some of us learn to sit with our pain, others learn to pass it on. The big question is: how do we break free from these patterns and imagine new ways of being?

The film engages with questions of forgiveness. Is the older sister, Meryam, right when she suggests it's «easier to be angry and pretend you care» than to deal with what's in front of you?

That line from Meryam really gets at something critical. She is probably the only one who knows the root of her brother's deep anger. Anger is always a way of avoiding the messier work of understanding and healing. It is a shield against having to really look at the complexity of who we are. Meryam's words direct her brother to a painful truth he has been avoiding for decades.

Your film has drawn comparisons to the work of David Lynch, Brian De Palma, and the tradition of psychological thrillers. How do you see your film in that lineage?

That comparison means a lot to me. Films by Hitchcock, De Palma, and Lynch in particular blur the boundaries between internal and external realities. With *The Things You Kill*, I leaned into that same lineage. I didn't want to just construct suspense; I wanted to unearth it from the unconscious, letting disorientation become the form. The unraveling of identity, the use of silence, and the fusion of the domestic with the surreal all felt like gestures in conversation with that tradition. And that is why audiences familiar with that grammar of unease instinctively recognize its echoes in this film.



BIOGRAPHY ALIREZA KHATAMI

Alireza Khatami is a Canadian writer, director, and producer. Born into the Indigenous Khamse tribe in southeast Iran, he draws from the oral storytelling traditions of his heritage to craft films that blend magic realism with incisive social commentary. His work explores the invisible structures of power, memory, and identity through bold and unconventional cinematic language.

His debut feature, *Oblivion Verses*, premiered at the Venice Film Festival, winning the Orizzonti Award for Best Screenplay and the FIPRESCI Prize. His second feature, *Terrestrial Verses* (co-directed with Ali Asgari), premiered at Cannes in Un Certain Regard and has been released in over 15 countries.



His latest film, *The Things You Kill*, premiered at Sundance 2025, where it received widespread acclaim from both juries and critics, winning the World Cinema Dramatic Directing Award. Described as “brilliant” by *Variety*, “feverish” by *IndieWire*, and “a case study in how to make an effective psychological thriller” by *Vulture*, the film confirms Khatami’s place as a vital voice in Canadian and international cinema.



— FILMOGRAPHY ALIREZA KHATAMI

2023
2017

Terrestrial Verses — Cannes Un Certain Regard
Oblivion Verses — Best Screenplay award in Venice Orizzonti



— BIOGRAPHY CAST

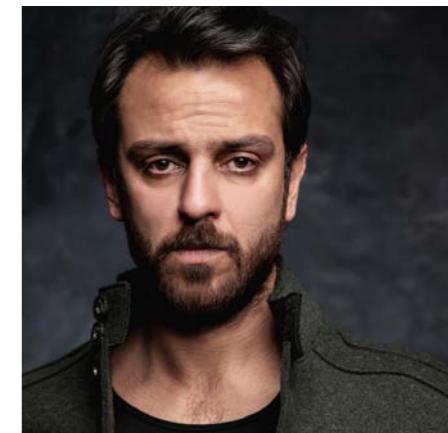
EKIN KOC

Ekin Koc is an actor based in Berlin and Istanbul, known for his compelling and natural performances. He received critical acclaim for his role in *Brother's Keeper*, which premiered at the Berlinale, where it won the FIPRESCI Award, and earned him the Best Supporting Actor award at the Ankara Film Festival. His work in *Burning Days*, selected for the Cannes Film Festival, further solidified his presence in international cinema. Born in Antalya in 1992, he studied acting at the Stella Adler Conservatory in New York, where he honed his craft and developed a deep appreciation for character-driven storytelling. He has built a reputation for his thoughtful and sincere approach to acting, with a focus on portraying complex, human stories.



ERKAN KOLÇAK KÖSTENDİL

Erkan Kolçak Köstendil, born on January 16th, 1983, in Bursa, is a acclaimed Turkish actor, director, writer and musician. He gained early recognition with his role as Karlos in the TV series called Ulan İstanbul and rose to prominence with his portrayal of Vartolu Saadettin in *The Pit*. The show has reached huge success across the world. Beyond television, he has been active in theater, performing in notable plays such as Aut and 12 Numaralı Adam, which has been running since 2018, achieving remarkable success internationally and toured all over Europe, performing to a wide audience. His most notable performances include his portrayal of Piroz in Soner Caner's Netflix Original Movie called *Heartsong*, his performance as 'İhsan' in the 2023 Netflix Original Series 'Yaratılan' (Creature) and his guest appearance in the 2024 Dutch film 'Zwijgrecht'. Köstendil remains active in many creative mediums, continuing his work as an actor, screenwriter, and director.



HAZAR ERGÜCLÜ

Hazar Ergüçlü, born in 1992 in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, graduated from the Theatre Department of Haliç University Conservatory. She was discovered at the age of 17 by the renowned director Derviş Zaim, which led to her film debut in *Shadows and Faces*. Ergüçlü has since built a successful career in both cinema and television. She won the Best Actress award at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival for her performance in the film *Snow*, which she also co-produced. She also participated in Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *The Wild Pear Tree*, which was featured at the Cannes Film Festival. On television, she gained widespread recognition with successful projects such as *Kuzey Güney*, *Medcezir*, *Yüksek Sosyete*, and *Alev Alev*. She starred in Netflix's first original series *Hakan Muhafiz* and in BluTV's adaptation of the acclaimed series *The Affair*, titled *Saklı*. Ergüçlü has also worked internationally, starring in the BBC One series *Mallorca Files*. She won the Best Female Actress in Cinema Comedy or Dark Comedy award at the 25th Sadri Alışık Awards for her role in the Netflix film *Gönül*.



CAST & CREW

113 min

CANADA, FRANCE, POLAND, TURKEY

2025

1.77

Dolby 5.1

Turkish

Ali Ekin KOÇ

Reza Erkan KOLÇAK KÖSTENDİL

Hazar Hazar ERGÜCLÜ

Father / Hamit Ercan KESAL

Director Alireza Khatami

Screenplay Alireza Khatami

Director of Photography Bartosz Świniarski

Production Design Meral Aktan

1st Assistant Director Serap Aydoğan

Production Manager Murat Polat

Casting İpek Efe

Costume Design Serap Aydoğan

Makeup Design Mehdi Sayad

Editing Selda Taşkın & Alireza Khatami

VFX Supervisor Darren Wall

Sound Benjamin Laurent

Sound Edit Ange Hubert

Sound Recorder & Mixer Benjamin Laurent

Colour Grading Hanna Rudkiewicz

— PRODUCTION & SALES

Film was Financed by	Telefilm Canada / Arte Cofinova / PFI / Eurimages
Supported by	Ile de France / Ontario Tax Rebate / WCF / Torino feature lab Award
Production	Fulgurance, Remora Films, Lava Films, Tell Tall Tale, Band With Pictures, Sineaktif
Producers	Elisa Sepulveda-Ruddoff, Cyriac Auriol, Mariusz Włodarski, Alireza Khatami, Michael Solomon
Coproducers	Marta Gmosińska, Ekin Koç & Cenk Ünalerzen
Executive producers	Naomi Despres, Michèle Marshall (Desmar) & Ercan Kesal
Country	Canada, France, Poland, Turkey
Distributors	Mongel Media (Canada) / Cineverse (USA) / Le Pacte (France) / Filmin (Spain) / Danaos (Greece) / MOOOV (Benelux) / Discovery (Ex Yugoslavia) / Filmware (Taiwan) / PT Falcon (Indonesia) / BookMyShow (India)
International Sales	Best Friend Forever

© 2024 FULGURANCE, REMORA FILMS, LAVA FILMS, TELL TALL TALE,
BAND WITH PICTURES, SINEAKTIF

