

RECALL

Director's Statement

Destiny has a cat in Aguaverde. Her name is Loretta. Gil doesn't even know the cat's name until Destiny says she needs to be fed. It's a small beat that reveals everything: what he catalogs, and what he misses.

Gil Padilla—the new mayor—can quote budgets, statutes, and invoice numbers, but he doesn't even know his daughter's cat's name. Not because he doesn't care—because he's been trained to care about what a system recognizes. The forms are survival. The cat is love. He confuses them.

That's the tone of RECALL: the world is ending in small, bureaucratic ways, and the only people still capable of tenderness are the ones everyone else calls "crazy."

Gil won a special election by forty-three votes. He's proud of it. He treats it like proof: a town chose him. A town put him in charge. But Gil is the kind of man who can't walk past a staircase without noticing what's missing in the middle. He counts. He measures. He asks the questions that make other people uncomfortable.

This film is a procedural thriller about grief — and about what grief looks like when it's forced to survive inside paperwork.

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Gil's mother was a Downwinder. Rosa Padilla grew up in the shadow of the Trinity test and spent her life being told to keep quiet, stay inside, trust the experts. She got cancer. She applied for compensation. She was denied again and again. She died filling out one more application, one more form, one more attempt to become a number the system would recognize.

She left behind two things: her case file and her Geiger counter. Both labeled with her name. Both waiting for someone to finish what she started.

Gil has been seeing numbers ever since: in invoice amounts, addresses, permit IDs. He doesn't see patterns because he wants to be right. He sees patterns because the world trained him to distrust — and then asked him to prove his distrust with documents.

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THE UNIVERSAL ENDING

The ending has to follow the audience home. Not metaphorically — physically.

The visible violation is easy: a missing handrail on a wide public stair. Anyone can see it. Anyone can feel the tiny shock of: "How did that pass inspection?"

The invisible violation is what makes the ending universal: the foundation. The sand. The fill. The part of the building you will never inspect because your life depends on believing it's safe.

Downwind communities across the Southwest have lived with a specific kind of betrayal: the wind follows the baseline of mountains like a delivery route — and what it carries doesn't disappear. It settles. It becomes dust. It becomes soil. It becomes "normal" enough to build on.

In our story, the conspiracy isn't only in the water. It's in the materials — the quiet decision to use fill sand from the settling ponds they drained after Trinity, to waive certification, to treat the ground beneath a neighborhood as a place to hide what nobody wants to store. The injection wells didn't create the contamination. They cracked the slabs. The cracks let it up.

When Gil looks into camera and says, "Forty-three. Or forty-two. Depending on who you ask. Did you see it?" he is not asking if you understood the plot. He is asking if you noticed—because noticing would change how safe your life feels.

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THE STEPS

Two scenes bookend this discovery. In Scene 14, Gil stands on the bank steps — wide, public, institutional — and sees the missing handrail. The visible violation. Everyone walks past it. He can't.

In Scene 56, Destiny comes home. Her apartment steps. A hairline crack in the concrete — the kind of thing her father would notice, the kind of thing she trained herself not to see. She reaches for her keys. Stops. Pockets them. Turns away.

Cut to: she's asleep on Gil's couch.

The conversion is complete. The steps are the threshold — public to private, visible to invisible, Gil's obsession to Destiny's awakening. What's under YOUR steps?

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THE REVELATION

Before the crawlspace descent, the audience is given everything they need. In the trailer, Gil finally explains where the town's foundation fill came from: settling ponds drained after Trinity, sold as cheap sand. Nobody asked where it came from.

"Everything along the baseline. The school. The clinic. Oak Street. This trailer."

"We're on it right now."

The crawlspace descent is not a mystery to be solved. It is confirmation of what we now understand. Rosa's Geiger counter. Rosa's suspicion. Rosa's case number. The whole film was about finishing what she started — and the answer was under their feet the whole time.

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A NOTE ON TONE

A film like this could easily become grim. Contamination. Denial. A mother who died waiting for acknowledgment. But RECALL is not built for despair — it is built for the kind of ending that Philippe de Broca found in *King of Hearts*: a tender indictment that does not abandon the audience.

King of Hearts is, at its core, about the cruel insanity of the "rational" world — and the strange sanity of the people labeled irrational. RECALL shares that DNA: Gil's red strings, code books, rulers, and maps read like madness... until the world proves he's the only one taking the bomb seriously.

The ending we're building toward isn't nihilism. It's a form of redemption: not the redemption of institutions, but the redemption of attention — the decision to count the people who were erased, to measure the things everyone else walks past, to refuse the comfort of denial.

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WHAT THIS FILM REQUIRES

RECALL doesn't require spectacle. It requires precision: a worn ruler pulled across the bank steps outside the entrance, a flashlight beam clicking in a dark crawlspace, the sound of wind pushing grit along a mountain base.

What we need is patience. A camera that observes instead of chases. An audience willing to sit with tension that accumulates rather than explodes.

And actors who understand that the most frightening line in the film is delivered quietly, over a Mesa Swirl, to a cat named Loretta.

Liana Marie Sive

Writer / Director

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