



# ***The User Illusion***

a psychological thriller ~115mins

## **Logline**

In the shadowy heart of Vienna, a cybersecurity analyst's mission to debunk psychics is derailed when an alluring medium conjures visions of his dead twin brother. As he investigates her mysterious abilities and wrestles with his own guilt, can he tell reality from illusion?

## **Synopsis**

A compulsive skeptic haunted by his twin's suicide, cybersecurity analyst Jim Knight channels his grief into exposing psychics online (a pursuit encouraged by his rationalist friends). But when he encounters Maiya, a mysterious mystic who grants him an impossible reunion with his dead brother, Jim's rigid materialism begins to crack. As Jim pursues a scientific investigation of Maiya's abilities, he finds himself drawn into increasingly surreal experiences that challenge his understanding of reality and himself. Jim's obsessive quest for proof blinds him to mounting signs of danger, leading to catastrophic consequences at work and the loss of his closest relationships.

## **Themes**

Through Jim's journey from cynical debunker to unwitting mystic, ***The User Illusion*** explores how grief, love and the limitations of human perception shape our experience. It also asks profound questions of our time: How do we construct our understanding of truth? What role do media and technology play in this process? At its heart, ***The User Illusion*** is a deeply personal story about the limitations of pure reason in the face of loss, and how our desperate need for certainty can blind us to deeper truths.

## **Development status**

- Completed screenplay
- Scriptwriting funded by an Emergent Ventures grant from talent-finder and economist Tyler Cowen
- Scientific consultation from renowned neuroscientist Anil Seth
- Looking for production partners, financing

## **Comparables**

Combining the emotional depth of *All Of Us Strangers* with the mind-bending visuals of *Inception* and the dramatic mystery of *Chinatown*.

## **About the writer**

Olga Yakimenko is a writer-director with a background in science communication, having been the video and multimedia producer at the Royal Institution's YouTube channel, and senior editor/producer at Red Bull Media House. Her mathematics documentary "Matter Patterns" screened at multiple festivals including the London Short Film Festival, CineGlobe at CERN and the Cambridge Science Festival. A recipient of the Emergent Ventures grant, she developed *The User Illusion* through extensive research in neuroscience and cognitive psychology, collaborating with leading researchers in the field. Born in Ukraine and based in Vienna, she brings her cross-disciplinary experience in both scientific and creative storytelling to her first feature film.

## **Contact**

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