

The Donkey Field

Based on the short film of the same name.



**J crosses the field almost every day to and from school.
Now that he is old enough he comes here with friends to mess
around, fly kites or sledge in the wintertime.**



**Now it's school holidays and the place seems deserted.
Then J spots a boy from his class standing at the corner but
when he gets over there R doesn't have much to say.**



Kicking a stone around J says '*We'll be back at school soon*'
but R says nothing and then barks '*I will be going back but not
you 'cos my father told me you're a filthy Z!*'



**J knows this can't be true but his head's
empty of words and suddenly he just wants to get home.
J's parents have never said a word about being Zs.**





**All at once J's an outsider and has to wear an emblem
for all to see. They have to hand in their phone, radio, and his bike,
and he's not allowed in parks or swimming pools.**



**When out of the house J tries to hide the emblem.
Neighbours they pass in the street pretend not to know them.
A few mutter '*sorry*' under their breath.**



**Then posters appear all over town, on railings and in
newspapers announcing that Zs must move into separate housing.
When the letter comes they're not given much time.**



J and his mother hurriedly bundle together clothes and a few books. He keeps his eyes down as they make their way out of the building to the handcart his mother's borrowed so they can take more than they can carry.

**They pull the cart through the streets, all piled up
with suitcases and bedding, walking in the gutter most of the way
as they're forbidden from sharing the pavement with non Zs.**



The large house on Eszter Street looks comfortable enough but the badge on the gate is unmissable and once they're in there they can't leave.





When the weather is warmer J and the other children spend time in the scrubby garden. They learn to stay away from the street side to avoid the passers-by who spit or throw stones at them.





They hear that other houses for Zs are being emptied and their occupants driven into the ghetto or loaded onto trains heading out of the city.



Late one warm September night, J's mother takes off their emblems and they steal through the hushed streets to a house on the outskirts whose owner is paid to hide them.



**They spend two days trying to sit still
and silent in the stifling darkness of the shuttered front room.
But the tension is too much and they have to go back.**





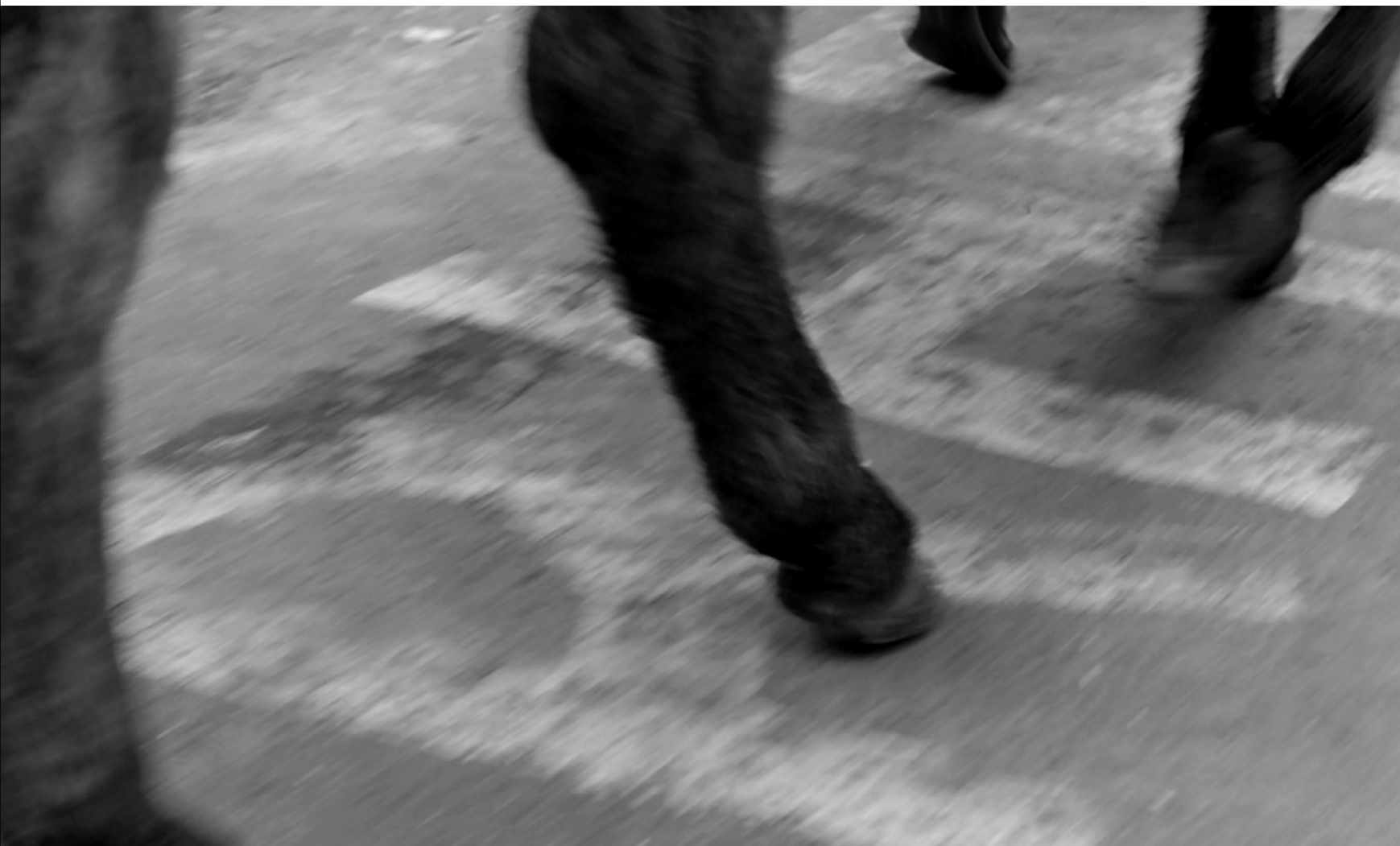
Back in Eszter Street they are notified that they must get ready to leave. It's early morning when there's a loud knock on the door and they're ordered to gather outside.



**After what seems like hours, standing with his eiderdown
in his arms and a heavy rucksack on his back,
they form up a long column of people all wearing emblems and
at the command of the guards set off down the hill.**



**Many of the houses on the way have closed their blinds
to the passing procession of Zs who were until
recently their neighbours. J reddens under the stares
of the people who have gathered to watch.**





There are jeers of '*good riddance*' and one man comes up and spits in J's face. Unable to stop for fear of the Gendarmes, J feels the gob of spit trickling down his face. He keeps his eyes glued straight ahead.

**There must have been a hitch in the plans
as when they reach the bottom of the hill the column's
halted and they're herded into a block of flats.**



**The building's pretty much derelict. A shell must
have blown out all the windows at the front as they're
boarded up now with cardboard and planks of wood.
There's no electricity or gas, so it's dark inside and icy cold.**



Along with about 70 others J and his mother find themselves stuffed into a small three room flat. Almost every inch of floor is covered with mattresses.

The overcrowding is bad, but the worst thing is the lack of sanitation. The stench catches in his throat and seeps into his clothes.

From the windows on the top floor J watches columns of Zs being marched out of town. J knows it's only a matter of time until they will be forced to join them.



**Then they hear rumours about a safe house
where Zs can be protected! With not a moment to lose
they set out at dawn to cross the river.**

**They see groups of armed militia everywhere and duck into
doorways to avoid being stopped. J and his mother
recognise the safe house from the flag outside and an official
looking notice on the door.**





Once inside the place seems deserted. Everyone's crammed into the shelter in the basement but there's no room and the people down there are fighting over the bits of food they're hiding.

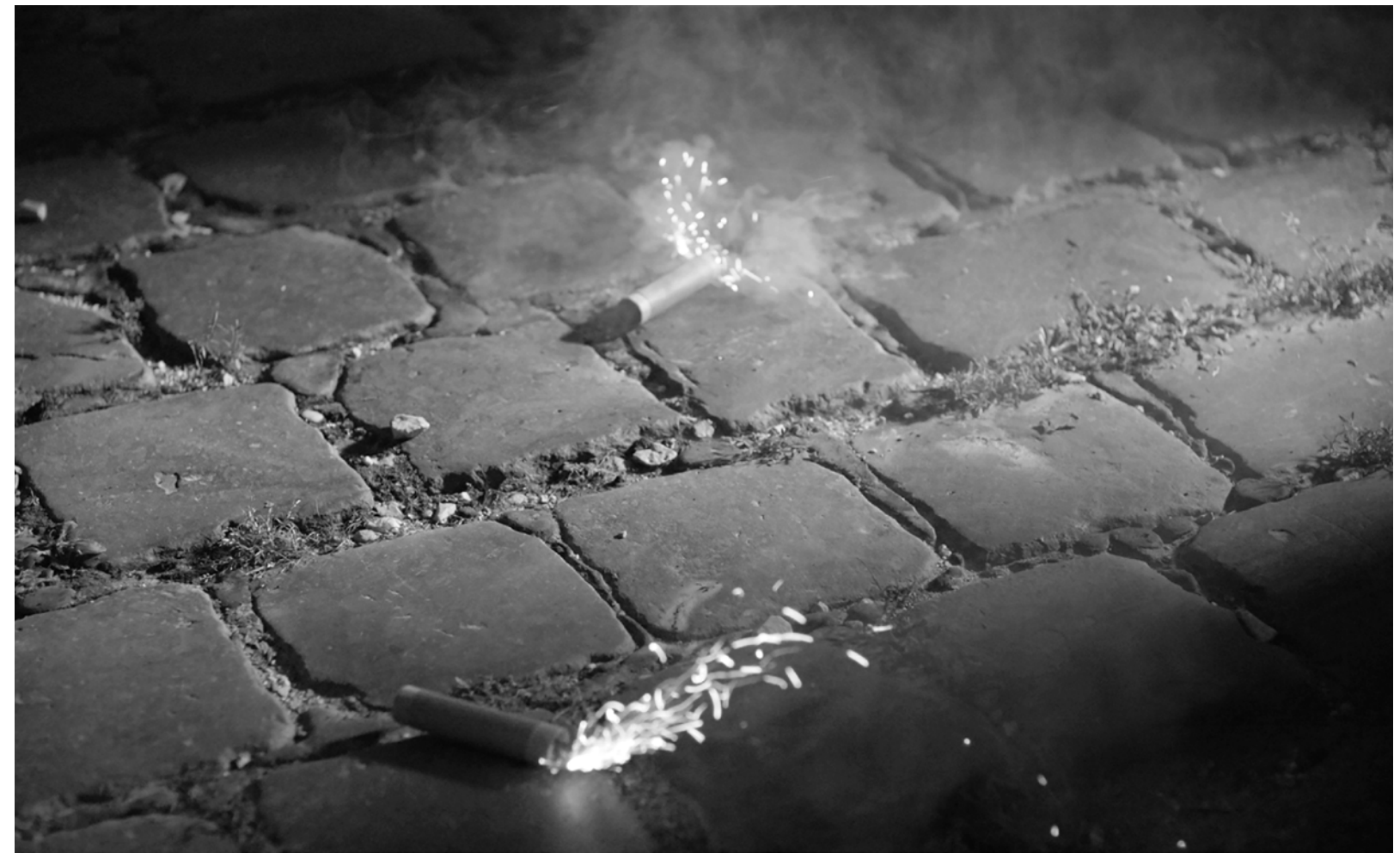
J is relieved when his mother says
'Let's take our chances upstairs!' Once again there's
no power but this time there's no water either.
They have to melt snow gathered from window sills.





**From their room on the fourth floor
J and his mother can hear the shouts of the hated Gendarmes
as they carry on their campaign against the Z's!**





**As the siege of the city tightens everyone
is close to starvation. The sound of shells and gunfire
are almost constant and close by now.**





**The roaming bands of uniformed thugs mean
that they daren't venture out. J has heard about Ivan B,
a kind and clever boy from the same year
at school who was in another house like theirs nearby.**





**One evening Ivan went out but got no further than
the doorway when some AC men passed. They were a bit
drunk and they made him drop his trousers.
Seeing that he must be a Z, J heard they shot him on the spot!**

**When the authorities realise that the safe houses
are protected by name only, J watches large groups of women
and children and the old being marched down to the river.**

**The rattle of machine guns that follows is unmistakable.
When the soldiers return, their machine guns are so hot
they have to be wrapped in sacking!**







**Despite the fact that they've almost lost control of the city,
the authorities war against the Z's seems far from over!
It seems to J a deadly game of chance if they
would be ordered down to the river or if they would soon
be celebrating with the soldiers of the invading army!**

For several days after the ceasefire J and his mother stay put. Though the shooting and bombing has stopped they can hear terrible things taking place on the streets outside as people take the law into their own hands.

When hunger and cold finally force them out J is shocked to find the city in ruins, still smoking. And they see bodies hanging from lamp posts some with labels round their necks saying AC or Z.

**On the way to the ghetto in search of family,
J is glad of the blanket of snow that covers the corpses they pass,
but he can still see the emblems on some of them.**





**J's cousin returns from across the border
and they hear about the horrors that happened there
and what became of those that never came back.**







**After the war is over his mother warns
him to be wary of their old neighbours, some of whom
must have been collaborators.**



**Several years later J and his mother leave the city
and make a new life far away. Without uttering a word they enter
a pact of silence that J only breaks many years later.**



