

When  
big  
people  
lie





presents

a  
gianfranco  
fernández-ruiz  
film

when big people lie 2

when  
big  
people  
lie

film category  
narrative short

genre  
drama/fantasy

production location  
los ángeles, ca  
usa

language  
english

picture format  
digital

aspect ratio  
1.85

shooting formats  
4k, 6k, 8k

total running time  
13:36 mins



# logline

Eight-year-old Elvis' world begins to sink when his mother marries an immigrant stranger for money.



# synopsis

Elvis (Kaden Quinn) just turned eight, and for his birthday, his wish has sort of come true. His single mother Lola (Sasha Merci) has invited an immigrant stranger, Mohammed (Faruk Amireh) to live with them in exchange for money. The arrangement takes an unexpected turn when Lola and Mohammed plan an unconventional, seemingly impromptu wedding. Spiraling into a sea of confusion, Elvis navigates his newfound stepfather while half-remembering his biological one (Ajayi Jackson) in flits of collapsing memory and make-believe. When an unscheduled visit from authorities (Diane Sargent) surprises the family, it not only complicates his world, but risks everything he knows.

# writer/ director bio



Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz is an award winning writer and director. His coming of age short film JEROME, qualified for the 96th Academy Awards, was a finalist for the HBO Short Film Award, and won Best Boston Film at the Boston Short Film Festival. More recently, Gianfranco won Best New Filmmaker of the year by NewFilmmaker LA for their 12th Annual Awards and is the recipient of the Anthony Rhulen grant. His work was also selected by the Latino Film Institute for the 2024 Inclusion Fellowship for the short film GRANADA. His feature entitled Summer of Mercedes is a 2023 Quarterfinalist of the Nicholl Fellowship. Gianfranco holds an MFA from the AFI Conservatory in Directing. His thesis film and most personal story yet, **WHEN BIG PEOPLE LIE** recently placed as a finalist for Shore Scripts Short Film fund 2023 and awarded the Bridges Larson grant, it's available now on Coverfly's The Red List. His shorts have played at over 50 film festivals globally, and placed at a dozen more film festivals including Urbanworld, Austin, American Black Film Festival, Screencraft, NALIP, the Commercial Diversity Directing Program and more. His film DEAD FLESH, especially created for the Louisiana Film Prize, won both the Top Five and Founder's Circle Awards. His short film ANEMOIA, SCENES FROM THE FUTURE was awarded the Future|Money grant by the Interledger Foundation which is currently in post-production. His short film Saborrrr! is reported to be the most diverse crew in Utah film history by the Utah Film Commission. Gianfranco marks culture as integral to a character's identity, but second always to a character's story.

# director's statement



In a photo book, I have images of me and my father. We're sitting in front of a fireplace in a library study. I never remembered that.

My mother finally told me one day that my memory served me right. There was no fireplace. I was in front of a backdrop in a prison. A photo op to show our little broken family without showing the myriad of things my mother navigated alone: the projects; food stamps; applying for every apartment outside of a tenement building; our first section 8 home in Jamaica Plain. My mother was the wily coyote. Antic after antic. She had her fair share of bombs blow up in her face. And as my father was deported, my mother found her way to a budding, underground industry among immigrants. This story, while fictionalized, happened to me.

A strange immigrant man, without papers, moved in. His name was Antonio. Much like my father in prison, we took fake pictures. The only difference was that the backdrops were real: at an impromptu wedding; during a casual night out; during dinners. He slept on my couch, but he wanted so badly to sleep in my mother's bed. After a while I wanted it too. Because before him, the term father was a bad word, only ever used to threaten me or punish me. The monster under the bed kind of thing. But Antonio brought new life to the word. He wanted to be my dad. And it didn't feel so bad having one, even if just for pretend. But at night, when the city howled, they'd argue over panty colors and fake stories in posed pictures, matters of life and death. One day, I woke up, Antonio entertained me before he went off to work, like any other day. Only it wasn't any other day. I never saw Antonio again.

a picture of Gianfranco  
and his father Franklin



a prison photo op on  
a library/fireplace backdrop

we went  
to see  
daddy at  
the  
water.



# key cast

introducing  
kaden quinn  
as  
elvis



## cast

Kaden Quinn	.....	Elvis
Sasha Merci	.....	Lola
Faruk Amireh	.....	Mohammed
Joseph Kamal	.....	Mounir
AJayi Jackson	.....	Rafael
Brisko C. Lathan	.....	Young Elvis





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bts



# key crew

Gus is a 2022 graduate of the American Film Institute. His thesis film Gorditx played across the USA, premiering at Cleveland International Film Festival and winning Best Short at Sioux City International Film Festival. His short film Dead Flesh won the Founder's Circle Award at the Louisiana Film Prize. He was born and raised in Los Angeles but has spent the last decade in Chicago. He received his education from Loyola University Chicago as well as the various improv institutions in the second city.

Gus worked as the on-staff coordinator and stage manager at One at Optimus, a commercial production company. He has since collaborated on various music videos, commercials, spec projects and the pilot for Showtime's WORK IN PROGRESS.



producer  
gus murray



writer  
pablo cervera gutierrez

Pablo has a BA in communication from Universidad Iberoamericana and a Screenwriting MFA from the AFI Conservatory. He has over ten years of experience as a freelance writer, working on advertising, television, and ghostwriting literary projects. His writer's room experience extends to the Netflix shows Daughter From Another Mother and The War Next-door, where he was a writer's assistant. His most recent short film Cuando Volvimos a la Tierra was awarded the McDonald's Spotlight Dorado grant, was a finalist for Shore Scripts Short Film fund 2023, and is currently on Coverfly's The Red List.

Miko Malkhasyan's "Cunningham" premiered at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival and the New York International Film Festival. He received a Master of Fine Arts in Cinematography from the AFI Conservatory in 2023 where he completed a large portfolio culminating in his thesis When Big People Lie. Miko's work spans over 20 years on shorts, features, period, and war pictures. He has also worked on documentaries, 3D, VR projects, dance films, music videos, and commercials all over the world including, Europe, Africa, Asia, Russia, and the USA.

He received the award for Best Cinematography at the New Port Beach Film Festival for the dance film "Nora" and the Grand Prize for Cinematography at the Golden Eye Festival of Cinematography. He is the Vice President of the ACG (Armenian Cinematography Guild) and a proud member of The Armenian National Film Academy.



cinematographer  
miko malkhasyan



production designer  
Lakshmi Nymisha  
Gummadi

Nymisha Gummadi is an Indian production designer and art director based out of Los Angeles, Pursued MFA in Production Design at the American Film Institute (AFI). In her short time in L.A., she has independently production designed and art directed several short films, a full-length feature, commercials and music videos. She completed her undergraduate degree in Architecture and worked for over a year with a renowned design firm in India as an architect and interior designer before moving to LA.

Ziyang Guo is a film and TV editor based in Los Angeles. She holds an MFA in Editing from the American Film Institute and brings extensive experience across various creative and technical roles in films, commercials, and marketing projects. Beyond her editing expertise, Ziyang is skilled in photography and graphic design. She is known for *Memories of Love Returned*, *When Big People Lie*, and *Open Up*.



editor  
ziyang guo



make  
a  
wish  
mommy.



so  
you  
a  
man  
now?





# when big people lie

## CONTACT

WRITTEN BY

Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz & Pablo Cervera Gutierrez

DIRECTED BY

Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz

Gianfranco Fernández-Ruiz  
gianfranco.fernandez@gmail.com

GUS MURRAY | Producer  
gmurray4@afi.edu

SCREENER AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

