



26th BUSAN  
International Film Festival  
6-15 October 2021

A FILM BY KADRI KÕUSAAR

# DESERTED

FRIDA WESTERDAHL

ALI SULIMAN

FIRAS TAYBEH

MAGNUS KREPPER

JESSICA GRABOWSKY

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# DESERTED

*In the desert you'll find your soul.*

Original title **Deserted**  
Genre **Modern hostage drama**  
Languages **English, Arabic, Swedish**  
Written and Directed by **Kadri Kõusaar**  
Cinematography by **Sten-Johan Lill E.S.C.**  
Editing by **Menni Renvall**  
Music by **BJ Nilsen**  
Sound Design by **Joonas Jyrälä**  
Costume Design by **Anu Gould**  
Make-Up by **Farah Jadaane, Bill Hazzam**  
Main cast **Ali Suliman, Frida Westerdahl**  
Producer **Aet Laigu**  
Co-producers **Charlotte Most, Maria Larsson Guerpillon, Essi Haukkamaa, Merja Ritola**  
Produced by **Meteoriiit OÜ (EE), MostAlice Film AB (SE), Greenlit Productions OY (FI)**  
World Premier **Busan International Film Festival**

92 min / DCP / 2.39:1 / 5.1 Dolby Digital

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## Synopsis

On an assignment to the abandoned, lawless and apocalyptic Sinai coast a Swedish photo journalist Ingrid (Frida Westerdahl) is kidnapped by a gang of Palestinian men and hidden in the desert. Soon Ingrid finds herself falling in love with the most sympathetic of the abductors, Ali (Ali Suliman). Ali's boss Moussa suspects that something is going on and becomes increasingly dangerous and violent.

“This is a film about an all-conquering love between people from completely different cultural backgrounds who find each other in the desert. It is in the desert where the soul becomes naked and what really matters comes to the surface,” describes Kadri Kõusaar.



## Director



Kadri Kõusaar is a multi-award-winning Estonian writer and director born in 1980. Her debut feature *Magnus* (2007), about a father trying to help his suicidal son, was the first Estonian film ever included at the official selection of Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard). Kadri's second film *The Arbitrator* (2013) premiered internationally in competition (East of the West) at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and her third film *Mother* (2016), was included in the programmes of more than 80 international film festivals to date and was Estonia's entry for the Oscars in the category of the Best Foreign Language Film in 2017. It premiered in the international narrative competition of Tribeca Film Festival. (2021) was released as part of the official selection of Busan International Film Festival.

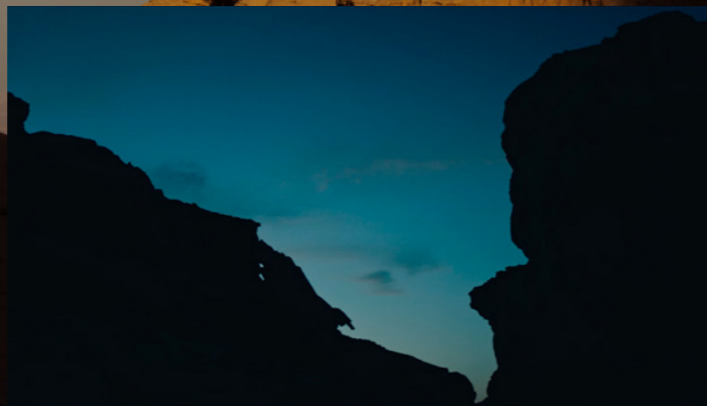
Director's statement – Kadri Kõusaar

There's an old Tuareg saying, "God created land with water for man to live in, but the desert to discover his soul." Amidst my wanderings in Egypt, Morocco and Jordan, I really fell in love with the desert - the way it caressed my soul - and wished to make a film about this feeling. In fact, "Deserted" is only the first of my desert-themed trilogy. Although the kidnapping plays an important part in the plot, "Deserted" is specifically not about the Stockholm Syndrome. It's mainly a fairy tale of two lonely souls connecting in the middle of the desert, a genuine love story.

Ingrid is my alter ego. I admire her courage, intelligence, and success. Yet as I began writing the first draft of the screenplay (in my early thirties), my biggest fear was ending up single, childless and lonely. I tried to analyse this fear, this longing for love via Ingrid's character. Isolated in the desert, Ingrid is actually forced to listen to her soul more than in the frenzied lifestyle from one job to another. Via Ali, she sees the purity, intuition and peace that spirituality and more family-oriented lifestyle can bring.

When her life is really in danger, Ingrid understands that she can just be killed and nobody would care. Whereas before Ingrid was sceptical, even arrogant towards her petit-bourgeois sister, in the desert Ingrid comes to realise that her sister is her only existing family. Her photography and journalism seem pointless without love.

The desert really talked to Ingrid. Hopefully it will to you, too.



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