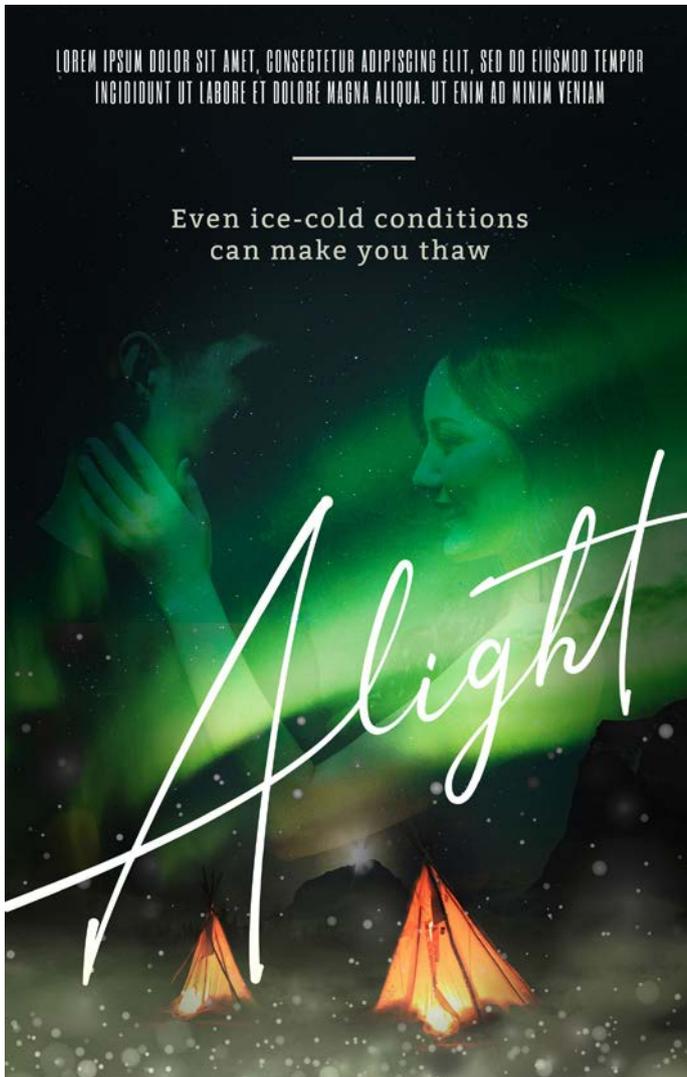


ALIGHT

— *Even ice-cold conditions can make you thaw* —

Created by: **JMG Stories** | Written by: **Rebecca Sandeman & Samuel Kendall**



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Miko: How is this any different to being stuck in our flat staring at the walls? We could be anywhere.

Naoki: But we aren't. We are here, waiting for something to happen.

Miko: Yes, for the snow to clear.

Naoki: It's not how I pictured it.

Genre: *Romance/Drama*

Format: *Feature movie, 1h 30m*

Target group: *16 years old and over*

Potential buyers: *Netflix, Amazon, HBO, various TV channels*

Estimate: *\$ 25-30 mill*

At Pitch-level Q2 2021

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Japanese couple Naoki and Miko attempt to both escape the bustle of Tokyo and address their struggling relationship by impulsively sojourning at the Northern Lights. After harsh weather conditions confine them to their Lavvo with two Sámi guides, everything they thought they knew about life and love is called into question.

Tsutsushimi is the Japanese phrase meaning tact, discretion and reserve, a message that in the eyes of many lies at the heart of the sociocultural ethos of Japan. *Alight* is a film that explores what it means to slowly reject Tsutsushimi and the expectations of others and instead embrace your own desires. It is entrenched in the existentialism and romanticism of Makoto Shinkai's *Your Name*, blended with the intimate *Saudade* of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. It seeks to address the dichotomy between our innate longing and the perceived expectations of the world around us.

Naoki and Miko are a couple in their mid-thirties; they are burnt-out and exhausted, working 12 hour days combined with the encroaching sense of absence in their marriage. Their family and friends continue to pressure them, pushing them into thinking that they should conform to the status quo and have a baby. One night, Miko's friend Sakura tells her about the myth that having sex under the Northern Lights always produces beautiful children. Mikko then impulsively books a trip to Norway for her and Naoki.

She is adamant the holiday will reinvigorate their marriage, facilitating the peaceful change of scenery they both crave. On arrival in the city of Kirkenes, they are greeted by Sámi guides, brothers Ante and Mikkel, who lead them to

their Lavvo tents set in the vast expanse of the wild Norwegian tundra. The physical and mental difference between Tokyo and the tundra becomes a catalyst for change; both Mikko and Naoki are a world away from their previous lives, a distance which forces them to consider their relationship and confront its inherent flaws.

There's an immediate spark between Miko and Ante which burns throughout the film. Ante tells his brother 'she's the one'; Naoki either doesn't notice or care. Naoki is preoccupied with fighting his own internal struggles and coming to terms with his sexuality; the three-day blizzard forces him to evaluate if he even sees a future with Miko in it. There are chasms of things left unsaid between them, amplified by the proximity of the Lavvo which now acts akin to purgatory or a prison.

Allegiances are irrevocably altered, relationships are formed and the two of them face their individual reasons for their discontent. Miko and Ante grow closer as Naoki falls further into himself, leading to a climactic evening where Miko and Ante confess their love for each other and sleep together. Naoki simultaneously breaks down with Mikkel in the neighbouring tent, the wind howling in the distance, as he finally accepts a need for things to change.

By the end of their trip, both Miko and Naoki will have transformed forever beneath the incandescent glow of the Northern Lights. Miko stays in Finnmark with Ante; she says a tearful goodbye to Naoki at the airport, both of them silently acknowledging they are no longer on the same journey, but instead forking paths leading in opposite directions.