

FORCE of HABIT

AN ANTHOLOGY SERIES OF 11 EPISODES
& A FEATURE FILM
QUESTIONING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Now
you
see it

DIRECTED BY KIRSIKKA SAARI | ELLI TOIVONIEMI | ANNA PAAVILAINEN
ALLI HAAPASALO | REETTA AALTO | JENNI TOIVONIEMI | MIIA TERVO



THE PROJECT



***Force of Habit* is an anthology series & a feature film, all directed by women, that question individually, and as a collection, gender stereotypes and the way women's lives are conditioned by a patriarchal society.**

The text of the presskit is written by **Iris Brey**, a Franco-American film and TV series critic specialized in questions of feminism and gender (for the magazine *Les Inrockuptibles*, and the radio shows *La Dispute* on France Culture). She holds a Ph.D. in French literature and cinema from New York University, and teaches film on the Parisian campus of the University of California.

- 2020: *The Female Gaze* (book – Editions de l'Olivier)
- 2018: *Sex and the Series* (book – Editions de l'Olivier)
- 2017: *Sex and the Series* (documentary series – OCS)
- 2017: *TED* talk "How *Game of Thrones* opened my eyes"

Every woman is discriminated against because of her gender. Sometimes in obvious ways, sometimes through much smaller details. This collection of films encapsulates these moments when you realize that, because you are a woman, you are being treated differently. The strength of each film is to make you experience as a spectator, whether you are a man or a woman, these revelatory instances that are sometimes so common, you tend to no longer pay attention to them. These films deconstruct how we have gotten used to gender disparity, and how women are often at a loss of words to pin point these situations.

***Force of Habit* discloses and deconstructs the invisible use of power towards women both in private lives and in the society. It highlights blind spots and observations on the private and societal use of power towards women.**

Not only do the films give value to the experience of being a woman (by saying that these stories need to be told), they also open a much-needed conversation (for men and women) about gender roles. **This is why it is an indispensable collection: by putting into images what we have trouble putting into words, the collection urges us to witness the**

mechanics of domination that are at work in our society. *Force of Habit* explores how women and men are maintaining these power structures that often lead women to be silenced. The movies investigate how the protagonists try to find their voice and be heard. The collection as a whole operates in the same way, it gives a voice to women filmmakers that are shedding light on stories that have, for too long, remained in the dark.

Force of Habit questions the way we define consent, we represent rape, we create our body image, we live through oppression. Sometimes with humor, sometimes more seriously. By following how young heroines become sexualized by the male gaze, how they need to fight for men to hear them when they say “no”, how as young adults they still struggle to put rape and consent into words, how they need to find the inner strength to live in their bodies and love them, ***Force of Habit* paints a bigger picture. It shows what it is like to be a woman in a world post MeToo.** In a world that has opened its eyes, is more aware, but that still doesn't want to face how ubiquitous discrimination and violence against women are.

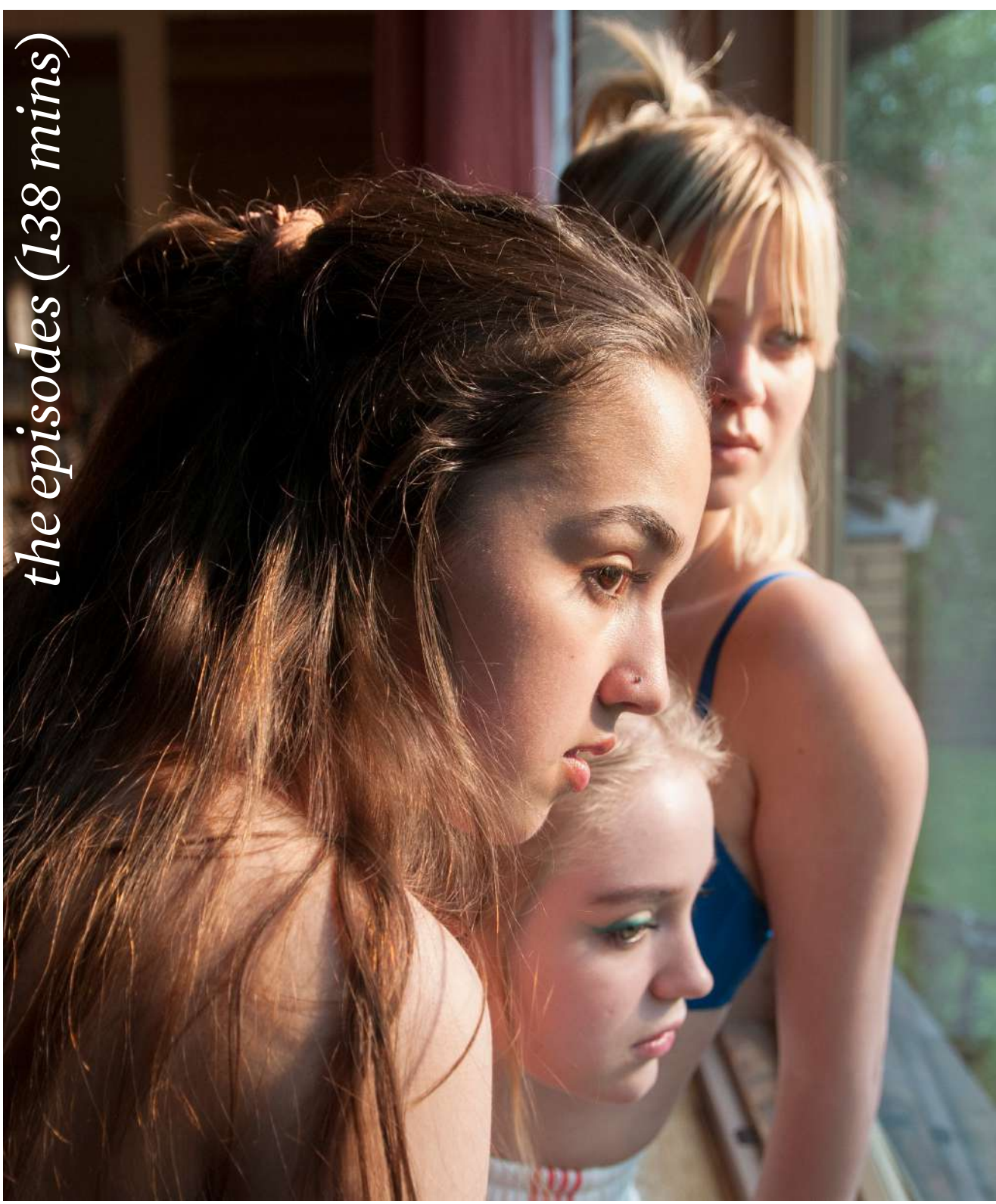
Force of Habit demonstrates how we all have internalized gender roles. The 11 films portray the urgency to give the female point of view of a story, to be in her eyes, in her body, in her experience. In order to fight against discriminations, we first need to be able to represent them. Once we can FEEL the discrimination, thanks to fiction and the identification that operates with the heroine, we will no longer be able to look away when we see it before your eyes. We will look straight at it and become agents of change.

The project intends to raise structures for discussion about gender equality. Only once the existence of these issues is recognized, and when they are talked about out loud, will it be possible to change them.



THE ANTHOLOGY SERIE

the episodes (138 mins)



1

CONSENT

2

RAPE

3

GAZE

4

**POWER
DYNAMICS**

CONSENT



A STOP (6 mins)

On her way to school in a bus, a young woman is listening to music while two men keep disturbing her.

Directed and written by Elli Toivoniemi

NO BIG DEAL (11 mins)

A couple's romantic evening changes when a man gropes the woman.

Directed and written by Alli Haapasalo

BOUDOIR (15 mins)

After a party at her place, Emmi just wants to sleep but one of her friends does not want to let her be alone.

Directed and written by Reetta Aalto



These episodes and the works suggested above explore how women often find themselves in a position where they have trouble expressing their desire or their lack of desire while being afraid of hurting a man's feelings. **These stories show how women are not taught that their bodies are their own, how women's bodies have been constructed as public commodities, that can be touched and used by men. Women are afraid of men's reactions and the violence that men use when they feel humiliated by rejection.**

A Stop portrays how men own public spaces. How girls try to remain polite in order not to offend men. How girls are scared and are alone. The movie shows how the other passengers, even other women, are either also afraid to interfere or think it's normal. The framing of the girl's body depicts her loneliness while being in a crowded bus, as if there were an invisible barrier between her and the rest of the world. The only way to change this situation is either for the girl to be less scared to speak up and say "no" knowing she will find refuge in the other passenger's reaction. It is also the passenger's responsibility to act and speak up and make sure the girl is not left alone.

No Big Deal shows how a woman reacts to an aggression in a public space. She is not sure how to react and waits for her husband's reaction. He feels stuck, either he can confront the man and fall into stereotypical macho behavior or he can try to pretend nothing happened and minimize the violence. The movie shows how micro aggressions and aggressions are part of a chain of violence, one small act leads to the next. So when the husband tries to make his partner feel as if that gesture is not as "bad" as rape, he participates in a rape culture where aggressions towards women are seen as part of life and should not be treated seriously.

Boudoir depicts how a man will not accept "no" as an answer. We see him trying different approaches to get the woman to finally give up. Women often explain that sometimes it is just easier to give up and have sex rather than argue. The mise en scene shows us how this woman is literally crushed by the man's desire who never listens to her or her body. We see in the man's character how the woman becomes more and more of an object and no longer a person as she continues to say no to him. This episode pushes us to think of how we make others respect boundaries, how we need to teach young men that their desire cannot overshadow their partner's and to listen to visual and body language as to understand what the person in front of you wants.

► TO GO FURTHER

Films

- *678* by Mohamed Diab

Series

- *Girls* by Lena Dunham, Episodes "On All Fours" and "American Bitch"
- *Sex Education* created by Laurie Nunn

Literature

- *King Kong Theorie* by Virginie Despentes
- *Cat Person* short story by Kristen Roupenian in the New Yorker

Art

- *Rythme 0* by Marina Abramovic
- *Fully Automated Nikon* by Laurie Anderson

RAPE

A photograph of a man and a woman in a car. The man, with a beard and long hair, is looking towards the camera with a distressed expression. The woman is leaning her head against his, looking away with a sad expression. The background is dark, suggesting it's nighttime.

PLAY RAPE (19 mins)

A young actress, passionate about her profession, rehearses a rape scene.

Directed and written by Anna Paavilainen

IT'S ALL RIGHT (16 mins)

A man has to defend a rape victim for the first time in a court room.

*Directed by Miia Tervo,
written by Jenni Toivoniemi & Miia Tervo*

The three movies illustrate how, when it comes to rape, the silencing of women operates. Other men don't want to hear about it, other women don't want to hear about it and the judicial system fails to hear the rare ones who have spoken.

Play Rape shows how an actress struggles with the idea of playing a rape scene without discussing the repercussions with the men who control the narrative. The movie operates as a lens on what happens when an experience that concerns primarily women is being depicted and told by men in the entertainment industry. Rape has been used as a narrative tool in the arts to create tension and drama, but it never lingers on the woman's experience, it is never shown through the victim's eyes. The movie explores how the creative process around asking "how should we portray rape" is being ignored and how the actress' processing is not taken into account. Here the movie also shows how actresses are stuck in a system where their voices, their experiences and their opinions are not heard, not valued. Who makes art in society? What stories are being told and who gets to tell them?

It's All Right is the only movie in the collection that shares the male protagonist's point of view. We see how he discovers that the judicial system is mostly a boy's club not built to protect the few women who actually press charges against their rapist. Because he has to defend the victim, he experiences for the first time how the judicial system remains unjust. And how the feeling of reparation cannot come from a system that is flawed. It is interesting to also see the isolation of men who discover the structure to keep women silent and the mise en scene makes us feel the loneliness of a man in a very rigid structure.



► TO GO FURTHER

Film

- *All Good* by Eva Trobish

Literature

- *The Mother of All Questions* by Rebecca Solnit
- *Watching Rape* by Sarah Projansky
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

Art

- *Suzanna* (Book of Daniel)
 - *The Rape* (Magritte)
 - *What Were You Wearing?*
- University of Kansas Exhibition

GAZE



FAT (9 mins)

Sonja is tired of her body being a problem for others.

*Directed by Kirsikka Saari,
written by Raisa Omaheimo & Kirsikka Saari*

SHAKE! (7 mins)

Shame related to the body grows and finally falls off on the dance floor.

Directed & written by Sonya Lindfors & Aino Suni

GIRL THING (12 mins)

Teenage girls take their shirts off at a party together but they attract an audience.

Directed and written by Inari Niemi



Body image is directly linked to the gaze. The way others see us and also the way women are filmed and framed participate in the way women are viewed as being valuable (meaning “fuckable”) or not. **The deconstruction of the gaze in the three movies enables sorority and feminism.**

Fat explores how the gaze can produce shame and imprisons an oversized woman in one narrative: the “fat woman”. It shows how the construction of this stereotype is shaped by everyone in society (all ages, all genders) and how the heroine reproduces the same violence in the way she looks at her daughter and at herself. The movie questions how each of us is responsible for the shaming of women that don’t fit a “norm” and how the violence that emerges from our gaze is a way to reinforce the patriarchal order by only allowing one type of woman to be seen as acceptable.

Shake! highlights how the gaze can physically constrain women. Here, a woman feels like she cannot act as herself because of other women judging her. The trope of women being mean to each other, of being “catty”, is also a stereotype that reinforces the patriarchy while annulling sorority. The movie shows how women, once they stop looking at each other to compare one another, can start living in their bodies. The liberation of the gaze ensures women’s liberation.

Girl Thing explores how men gazing at women changes the way women view themselves. When the girls dance together in their bra, they seem free, exploring self-expression in a safe space. When the men start looking at them and sexualizing them through their gaze, the girls don’t look at each other in a compassionate way but start competing for the men. However, they are able to take a step back. They regain control and start building a collective voice by not letting the men determine how they feel about themselves. Sorority prevails over the male gaze.

► TO GO FURTHER

Films

- *Le Bonheur* by Agnès Varda
- *Wanda* by Barbara Loden

Videos

- *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger
- *Last Fuckable Day* by Amy Schumer
- *Nanette* by Hannah Gadsby

Literature

- *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* by Laura Mulvey

Art

- *Speechless* by Shirin Neshat
- *Mirror, Mirror* by Carrie Mae Weems

POWER DYNAMICS

DREAM JOB (12 mins)

An environmental specialist goes to a job interview but the interviewer is more interested in what's going on with the Muslim minority.

Directed by Tine Alavi, written by Maryan Abdulkarim

LET HER SPEAK (13 mins)

A merited female scientist is at an international conference and realises that a male moderator is explaining her own theory back at her, until a remark from the audience wakes both speakers and listeners.

Directed by Ulla Heikkilä, written by Ulla Heikkilä & Saara Särmä

FESTIVE SPIRIT (14 mins)

In a post MeToo world, a woman reveals at her office party that one of her colleagues tried raping her.

Directed by Jenni Toivoniemi, written by Kirsikka Saari & Jenni Toivoniemi

These movies show how racism and misogyny are part of a system. It is very difficult to grasp for those who are in the dominant group that they are also feeding the system. In both films, you see that the protagonists are not ill-intentioned, they don't even see how they are participating in excluding minorities and women. In order to deeply change society, the people who have the power to make decisions need to take a step back and see how they base their decisions.

Dream Job is way to see how feminism needs to be intersectional. This movie shows how race, class and gender intersect at different levels of discrimination. The woman interviewing believes she is helping the other woman while saying racist and condescending remarks. Women of color face other challenges than white women. White feminists need to acknowledge how they are privileged because of their whiteness.

Let Her Speak shows how we need sorority to be louder than men that have been monopolizing the conversation. It shows how the few women that have infiltrated male dominated areas (like academia) need to speak to one another and share experiences, mentor and network (what men have been doing for centuries) in order to grow stronger and denounce how their voices are being dismissed for no other reason than their gender.

Festive Spirit stresses how in a post-Me too world, the women speaking are still not being believed. As if talking about harassment or abuse was a “buzz kill”, especially at a party. The movie shows how telling the truth shakes the patriarchal order. Here, it questions how one company functions and how people would rather turn their head the other way rather than look at how the company is structured. This shows how a microcosm can reflect how society functions at large. The movie also shows how other women participate in discrediting the ones who have the courage to speak, probably because it forces them to look at their own personal history of trauma and abuse.



► TO GO FURTHER

Films

- *Number One* (2017) by Tonie Marshall
- *Zero Dark Thirty* by Katherine Bigelow
- *Booksmart* by Olivia Wilde

Series

- *Borgen* by Adam Price
- *I Love Dick* by Jill Soloway and Sarah Gubbins

Literature

- *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde
- *Feminism is for Everybody* by bell hooks
- *Feminist Fight Club* by Jessica Bennett
- *The Main Enemy* by Christine Delphy

Art

- *Growing Up Female* by Abigail Heyman
- *Untitled (Your body is a battleground)* by Barbara Kruger

THE FEATURE FILM



(75 mins)

Force of Habit

is a multiplot feature film based on the following episodes of the anthology series:

A Stop, Boudoir, Play Rape, Festive Spirit, It's All Right, and No Big Deal.

SYNOPSIS

Hilla's and Kristian's romantic dinner is ruined when a stranger gropes Hilla. After a house party, Emmi gets an uninvited guest to her bedroom. An inexperienced prosecutor Alekski has a day to prepare for the rape trial Nina has waited for years. Milja's journey to school turns into a nightmare after strangers accompany her in a bus. An ambitious actress Emppu is preparing for a rape scene. Katja ruins the festive spirit in a company party when she reveals that her co-worker groped her after the last party.

DIRECTORS & WRITERS



Girl Thing
Inari Niemi



Fat & Festive Spirit
Kirsikka Saari



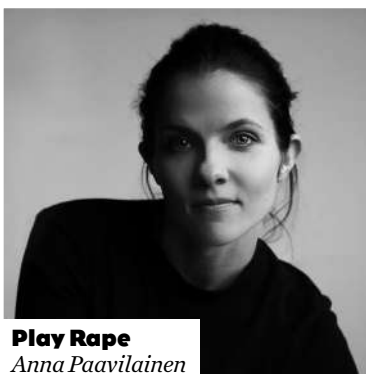
Fat
Raisa Omaheimo



Shake! *Aino Suni & Sonya Lindfors*



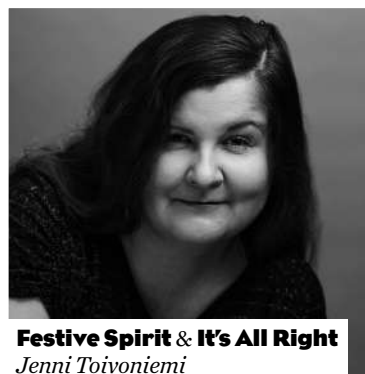
A Stop
Elli Toivoniemi



Play Rape
Anna Paavilainen



No Big Deal
Alli Haapasalo



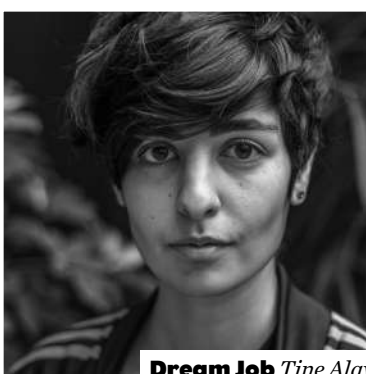
Festive Spirit & It's All Right
Jenni Toivoniemi



It's All Right
Miia Tervo



Let Her Speak *Ulla Heikkila & Saara Särnä*



Dream Job *Tine Alavi & Maryan Abdulkarim*



Boudoir
Reetta Aalto

CREDITS



PRODUCTION

Elli Toivoniemi
Sanna Kultanen (*Boudoir, No Big Deal, A Stop, Girl Thing, Fat.*)
Tuffi Films
Finland

CO-PRODUCTION

Siri Hjorton Wagner
& Farima Karim
[sic] film (*Dream Job, Let Her Speak*)
Sweden

FINANCING

PARTNERS

Finnish Film Foundation
Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE
Kone Foundation
AVEK, Ministry of Education
and Culture Finland
Creative Europe Programme
– MEDIA of the European Union
Church Media Foundation
Swedish Film Institute
Film Tampere
Filmbasen

ANTHOLOGY

SERIES

SCREENWRITERS

Reetta Aalto
Maryan Abdulkarim
Alli Haapasalo
Ulla Heikkilä
Sonya Lindfors
Inari Niemi
Raisa Omaheimo
Anna Paavilainen
Kirsikka Saari
Aino Suni
Saara Särmä
Miia Tervo
Elli Toivoniemi
Jenni Toivoniemi

ANTHOLOGY

SERIES

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Miia Tervo
Elli Toivoniemi
Jenni Toivoniemi

FEATURE FILM

SCREENWRITERS

Kirsikka Saari
Elli Toivoniemi
Anna Paavilainen
Alli Haapasalo
Reetta Aalto
Jenni Toivoniemi
Miia Tervo

FEATURE FILM

DIRECTORS

Kirsikka Saari
Elli Toivoniemi
Anna Paavilainen
Alli Haapasalo
Reetta Aalto
Jenni Toivoniemi
Miia Tervo

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Wanda Dubiel
Robert Enckell
Tommi Eronen
Per Graffman
Seidi Haarla
Joonas Heikkinen
Iida-Maria Heinonen
Tuuli Heinonen
Joel Hirvonen
Johannes Holopainen
Leo Honkonen

Niina Hosiasluoma

Lotta Kaihua
Ona Kamu
Anna Kare
Lauri Karo
Ria Kataja
Elina Knihtilä
Tommi Korpela
Krista Kosonen
Juha Kukkonen
Ella Lahdenmäki
Julia Lappalainen
Jenny Lehtinen
Pirjo Lonka
Elsa Marjanen
Deogracias Masoni
Eero Milonoff
Juho Milonoff
Yasmin Najjar
Meri Nenonen
Pyy Nikkilä
Cecilia Nilsson
Chike Ohanwe
Jarkko Pajunen
Irina Pulkka
Eero Ritala
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