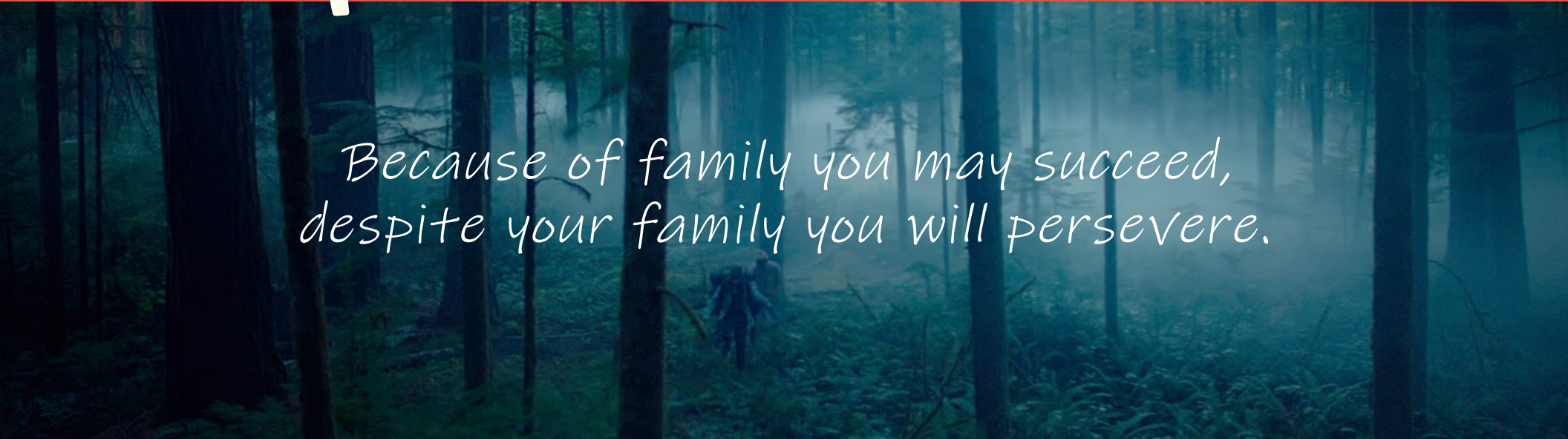




Sparkle & Shine



*Because of family you may succeed,
despite your family you will persevere.*

Logline

Avery, a young girl who grows up to be a man, endures bullying from his three older sisters and is called “pudge” after their father abandons them. With the support of his childhood friend Raoul, Avery embarks on a journey of self-discovery to become his true self.



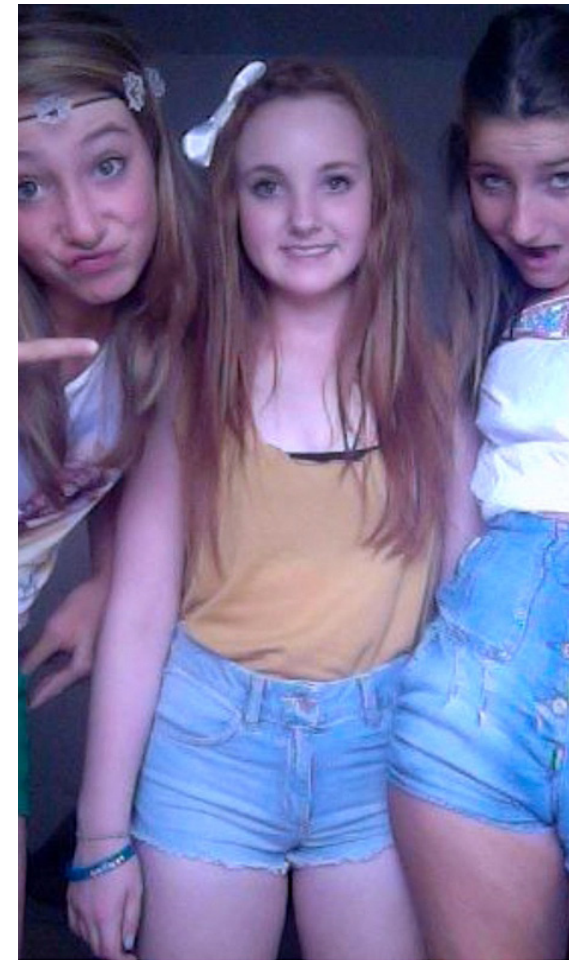


Sparkle and Shine is a coming-of-age story about Avery, a young girl who grows up to become a man while enduring bullying from his family. Despite his family's superficial support for his trans identity, Avery must navigate a toxic family dynamic. Leaving his small hometown allows him to shine in his true life, and his courage brings him back to face his past without fear.

Family life can bring harsh conditions, especially for a young child living their true self. In Avery's case, his bravery in becoming a man allows him to hold on to his family ties and small-town upbringing, miraculously persevering both.

Characters

Sparkle and Shine draws from the traditional harsh family dynamic many people experience, showcasing the journey to individuate and find love and romance. Avery (10, 23), is the youngest of four sisters and is subjected to verbal abuse and teasing by his siblings. Knowing he is a boy, Avery shuns the stereotypically feminine outfits he is forced to wear. Often isolated, he finds solace in building forts in the woods to hide from his volatile family life.







Tone & Mood Board

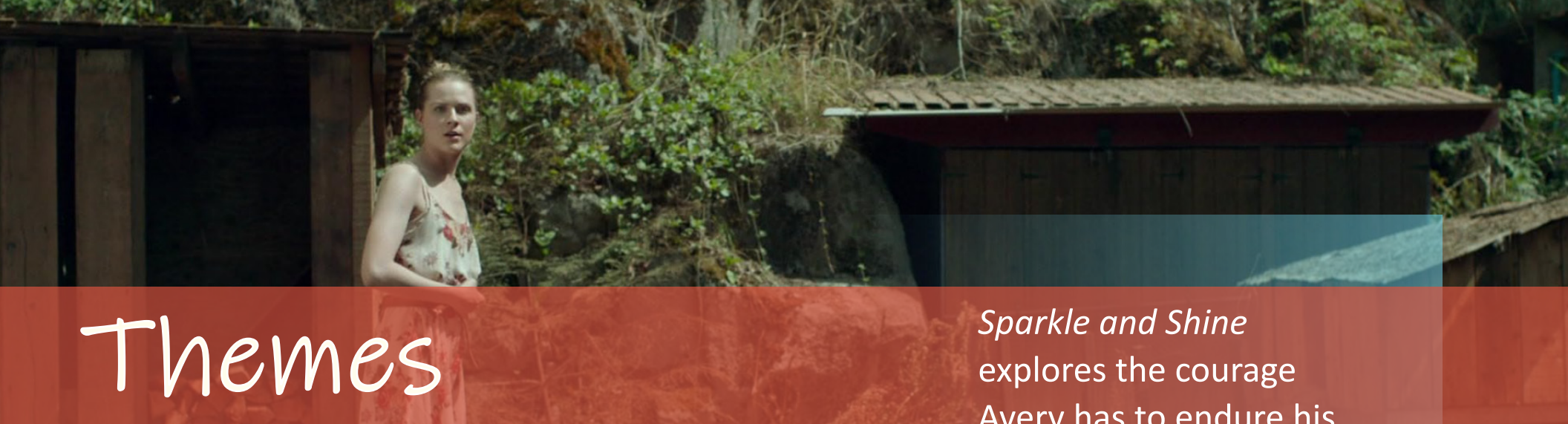


I am fascinated with portraying raw intimate stories of small-town families with a quiet resonance, similar to the gritty impact of films like *Into the Forest* and *Mouthpiece* by Patricia Rozema. *Sparkle and Shine* characters experience humor and tragedy, reflecting the necessity of finding inner strength even in the darkest times.

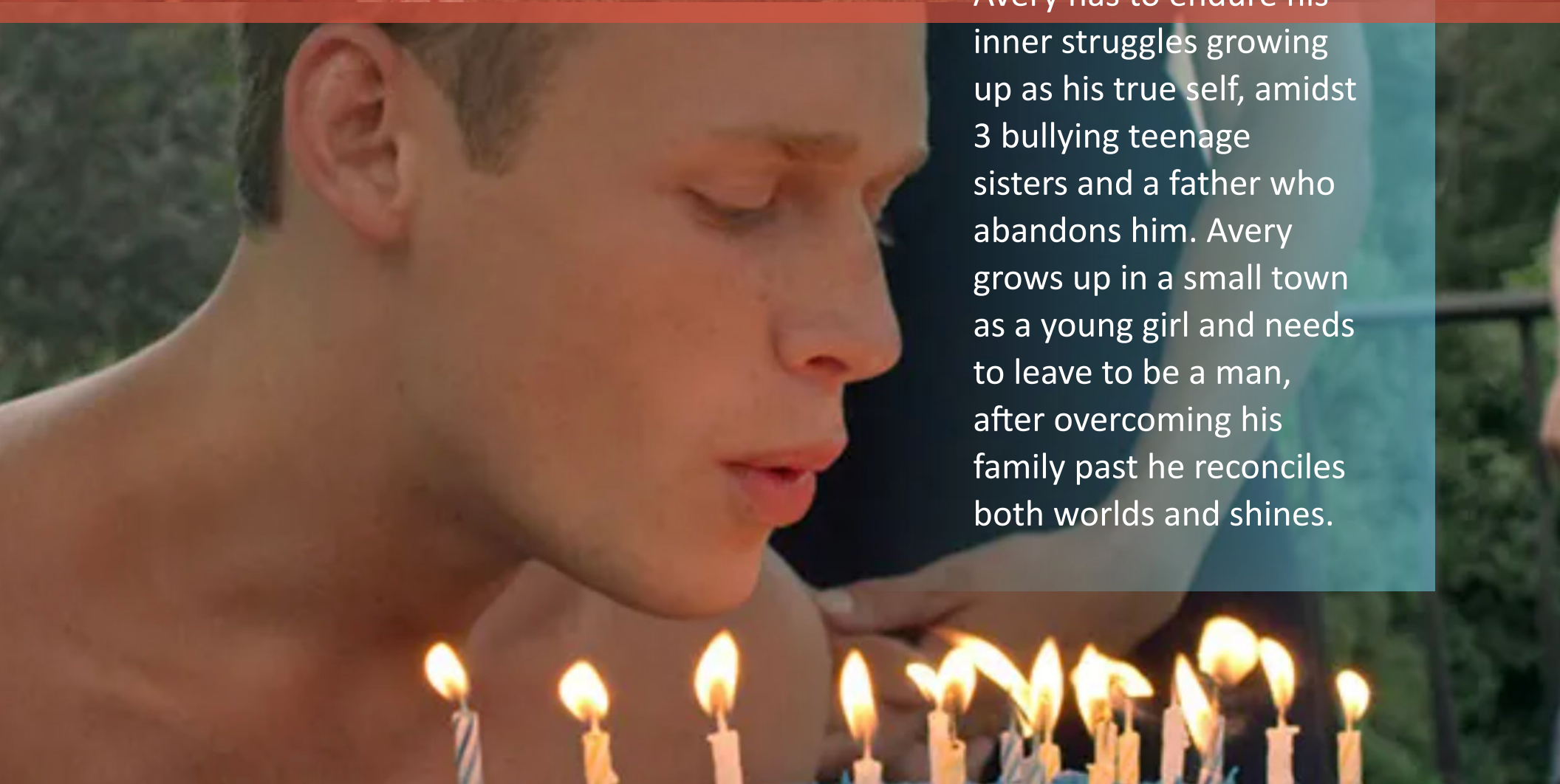
Avery feels free in nature, where he recognizes he is a boy. Conversely, the forest turns dark and murky when there is trauma in Avery's life; he takes pills to harm himself or at his graduation ceremony guys jump him and push him in the woods, indicating the presence of evil in the woods. The muted and gritty palette of films like *Tallulah*, *Uncle Frank*, and *Tender Bar* will convey Avery's pain and inner conflict.

The 1970s-inspired interior of the house and beach scenes in *Sparkle and Shine* with washed-out colors will reflect Avery's struggle to accept himself and combat depression. In contrast, bright colors and sparkly outfits will showcase Avery's confidence and sense of belonging when he dresses up with Raoul his childhood friend, or at the gay and trans bar he owns Goodman's, where his patrons are adorned in flamboyant colour and sparkly wardrobe and fashion.





Themes



Sparkle and Shine explores the courage Avery has to endure his inner struggles growing up as his true self, amidst 3 bullying teenage sisters and a father who abandons him. Avery grows up in a small town as a young girl and needs to leave to be a man, after overcoming his family past he reconciles both worlds and shines.

Plot Twist

After a chance encounter with his estranged father at Goodman's pub, Avery realizes he became the man he is because his father walked away. Although Avery blames himself for his father abandoning them, he understands that his father's absence allowed him to embrace his true self. Avery's father, Pete, remains unaware that he is speaking to his own child during their personal conversation about life.



Synopsis

Avery's family is raised by a single mother, Ruth, who works hard as a nurse and focuses on her daughters not becoming pregnant. Ruth's pragmatic and demanding nature makes her insufferable to her daughters. Their father left them to go work out west but never returned. Avery, a young girl grows up to be a man, endures bullying from his three older sisters, and is called "pudge" after their father abandons them. Despite his family's superficial support for his trans identity, Avery must navigate a toxic family dynamic.

Avery realizes she is a boy. Finding reprieve in the forest, she dreams of a different life. In dance class, Avery connects with Raoul, a confident boy keen on becoming a dancer. Raoul helps Avery endure school and family struggles, sharing a bond of survival in their small town. With the support of his childhood friend Raoul, Avery embarks on a journey of self-discovery to become a true self.

With Raoul's and his mother's support, Avery transitions into his true self and attends design school in Toronto on a scholarship. He falls in love with a successful businessman, David, and is genuinely happy. After a chance encounter with his estranged father at Goodman's pub Avery sees his father as who he truly is — a man who walked away out of fear and Avery lets him leave without knowing he is his own father.

Artist Statement

My work has always centered on women facing adversity and rising above their circumstances, often as unsung heroes. I explore how everyday domestic life leads women and families to fight for survival, love, and acceptance, showing characters' sadness and humor in their darkest hours. Using 8mm film footage, animation, illustration, and drawings, my film work intertwines creative dramatic narratives with richness and depth.

Sparkle and Shine introduces new themes of gender and power, using political dialogue to evoke compassion as Avery challenges family conflicts. This story showcases Avery's hope and conviction in embracing his true gender identity, offering a contemporary look at family dynamics that include trans family members. This is a new direction for my feature film writing, which I pursue with deep commitment and consultation.

Rhonda Buckley is a Newfoundland filmmaker with a feminist perspective. She is the writer, director of *Sparkle and Shine*, *Joan and Sadie*, and *Heart Troubles*. An award-winning filmmaker, her short films include *Surrounded by Water* (FIN, YFF, SJIWFF, FeFF), *Terranova Matadora* (Hot Docs 2016), *Avon Ladies Rural Style*, and *Elfreda*. *Surrounded by Water* was shortlisted for best dramatic short at the Yorkton Film Festival. *Terranova Matadora* screened at Hot Docs in 2016. Rhonda participated in the TIFF Producer Talent Lab with Genie-nominated *Crackie* by Sherry White in 2010. In 2024 Sherry White's film *Blueberry Grunt* will be produced by Ruth Lawrence and Rhonda Buckley.



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