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100 FRAMES

# COLD WATER [L'EAU FROIDE]

A FILM BY OLIVIER ASSAYAS





## INTRODUCTION BY STACY COCHRAN

There is something about those kids in *Cold Water* and the sad and sexy life they're living. The movie is set a long time ago and I saw it a different long time ago, and the two gaps of time are additive but also canceling of each other. They were high school kids in a great-looking movie of record albums and army jackets, and the suburbs of Paris were a fictional universe of invented circumstances. Why did I go crazy for them and that big glass door of the shop that shattered when Virginie Ledoyen crashed against it? Why do I still have a sense that I lived in that sequence?

You know that sensation of arriving in a European city just as the morning rush is about to begin? After getting in on the red-eye, when the cab is taking you quickly past waiters and outdoor tables and nothing has been used yet, and all of it is modulated by the recording engineer in your head, and arranged by the production designer you feel like you are, and directed out of the corner of your own eye, after very little sleep, charged with gratitude for the safe landing?

I saw *Cold Water* that way, and the view it gave me was as perfectly paced and stirred as the view outside the window of a moving taxi. I had already been wondering: Who is Olivier Assayas?

I had just seen his movie *Irma Vep* twice that week at a theater, and now I was asking people about *Cold Water*. *Have you seen this movie?*

I rarely got yes for an answer, so I often explained what little I knew about it; that I thought it was made for French TV, that it's not very long, that it had this party sequence—and stopped there. Describing it was like the stepfather rushing through the party, looking for the girl, and like the mom, waiting outside with her ratty red hair and shearling collar. A watchfulness came over me when they intruded onto that scene, onto the kids, and I found that I stopped describing it—with something related to an instinct of preservation.

What is it about this movie that makes me feel as if something in myself is at stake when I watch it and even when I talk about it?

Back to the present in which I watch Olivier Assayas picking up a prize for *Carlos*. And then get an email from *Esopus* in which, at the end of it, there is a question for me: "Also, have you ever seen Olivier Assayas's *Cold Water*?"

The movie shot to the surface of my heart as if a boy from my own tenth grade had called up and said, *Remember me?*

The tipping of the hardware-store rack. The unpacking of the clothes from her overnight bag. The early cut, the held shot, the framing of things. The father through the window as he leaves her behind. The blue truck.

Cyprien Fouquet and his rich torn sweater collar. The pointed yellow collar on his more-cautious little brother. The long dispute with his father that I watched last week without subtitles, thinking I understood the French, but actually more like remembering it without specifics. There was something about what his father said about suffering as Gilles was stepping away, and stepping around the rug, shoe length by shoe length....

Look at these 100 frames. They give you a chance to put your finger on the wheel as it spins, and hold it still on those kids, and their full and unfulfilled romance, and lonely love for each other overflowing into the woods, near the flames, in sexy confusion. *Remember them?*