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LOST IN HER

“Her” and “Lost in Translation” are two sides of the same love story. One told by Sofia Coppola after love ended, and one told by Spike Jonze years later, when love had become memory. Through Tokyo hotel rooms and digital interfaces, both films unravel the loneliness of connection, the ache of distance, and the way love lingers — not in presence, but in absence.

Once, they were married — two filmmakers tracing the same question: why do people drift apart even when they love each other? Years later, they answered each other through film. Sofia Coppola made *Lost in Translation*, about a woman who feels unseen by her husband. A decade later, Spike Jonze made *Her*, about a man who cannot move on from the ghost of a love he lost.

BEGINNING

Sofia Coppola and Spike Jonze met on a music video set in 1992. Soon after, they started dating, and after seven years together, they married in 1999. Four years later, in October 2003, *Lost in Translation* was released.

Then, two months later, in December, Spike and Sofia announced that they were separating.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Lost in Translation centers around Charlotte, played by Scarlett Johansson. She's trapped in a hollow marriage with her husband, who works as a music photographer. The film makes it clear that next to her husband, she feels inferior — an outsider.

She's in a country she's unfamiliar with, surrounded by people who speak another language. Her voice is “lost in translation.”

On the trip, she meets a man named Bob Harris, played by Bill Murray. Bob and Charlotte's bond offers each of them an escape from marriages made miserable for different reasons. Bob's wife heard only as a crackling voice on the phone seems disillusioned with him, while Charlotte's husband is too wrapped up in his work to notice her at all, if he even wants to.

The brilliance of their relationship lies in how it never feels like an affair. The way Bob and Charlotte spend their time together watching late-night TV, singing karaoke, visiting a hospital is disarmingly wholesome. Their conversations drift toward the big questions: What's the point of it all? The kind of question that fits only between strangers. They respond not with poetic monologues, but with the quiet honesty of people who speak from fragments of what's left inside them.

One ends in a whisper; the other begins with one.

HER

Ten years after the divorce became public, in December 2013, Spike Jonze released *Her*, a film about a man named Theodore, played by Joaquin Phoenix, who lives in a futuristic Los Angeles. He writes for a living and is going through a divorce with a woman he still loves.

At the beginning of the film, we see a man who's unhappy, lonely, and devoid of color — figuratively trapped in a corporate world. But everything changes when he meets Samantha, voiced by Scarlett Johansson. After getting to know her, Theodore seems happier and more alive. He's finally able to be himself around her, just like Charlotte with Bob.

Both characters — Charlotte and Theodore — are secluded, lonely, and quietly miserable until someone comes into their life and changes that. But not in the way we expect.

In one restaurant scene, Catherine finishes signing the divorce papers while Theodore flashes back to past moments of their relationship as if all those memories are being signed away along with the marriage.

Near the end of the film, Samantha reveals that she's in multiple relationships with hundreds of people an unsettling reminder to Theodore that she is, after all, an AI. It's something he's lost sight of throughout the film, in his attempt to humanize her as a replacement for Catherine.

From the beginning, he projected his own image and thoughts onto who she was, shaping her in his likeness. By the film's conclusion, he painfully learns to let her go. In setting Samantha free, he's able to let go of Catherine as well.

Samantha wasn't introduced into Theodore's life to replace a woman or become his next partner, but to help him move on from his past. In the same way, Bob was introduced to Charlotte not to replace John, but to help her come to terms with her relationship and move forward.

CONCLUSION

These two films were made at different points in Sofia and Spike's lives. *Her* and *Lost in Translation* already reside in the pantheon of great films, but I've come to appreciate them even more for what they represent beyond their fiction.

Her is a recognition of the self — of being thankful for how another person has shaped your journey, instead of harboring anger over their absence. Like *Lost in Translation*, it carries a tone of dreamy intimacy and the quiet beauty of fleeting connection.

Together, they can be read as a call and response between their creators — two people who once shared love, lost it, and then tried to understand it through the only language they both knew: cinema.

Ultimately, *Her* is Spike Jonze's love letter to the past, to his future, but above all, to Sofia.