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Rosso

Mika Kaurismäki

Finland, 1985, 90 minutes

Production Company: Villealfa Film Productions Oy

Screenplay: Mika Kaurismäki

Cinematography: Timo Salminen, Heikki Ortamo

Editor: Raija Talvio

Music: Marco Cucinatta

Principal Cast: Kari Väänänen, Martti Syrjä, Leena Harjupatana

Rosso is the most romantic of all the Kaurismäki films. Beginning with a line from Dante, "Midway in the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost", Mika has fashioned the story of a man who is indeed lost and attempts to find salvation in the arms of a former lover, whom we never see in the course of the film. Rosso is a contract killer for the Mafia, a Sicilian sent to Finland on a mission. He soon realizes that he has been sent to murder the woman he once loved, Marja. Arriving in Finland, it is not Marja whom he meets at her apartment but Martti, her brother, who for reasons he himself cannot conceive and without knowing the real reason for Rosso's trip, decides to help the stranger find his sister. So begins a journey to the west coast of Finland. Without understanding a word of what the other says, the two develop a curious friendship. But theirs is ultimately a trip without destination, an assignment without resolution. A film of unrelated vignettes and chance encounters, suffused by Rosso's memories of his relationship with Marja, Rosso portrays an empty, sometimes desolate, ultimately fatalistic view of life. Rosso, an Alain Delon look-alike, weaves through the uncertainties of this problematic world with all the dignity of a man in love, desperate to see his former girlfriend, his salvation resting in her presence. — *Piers Handling*

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