

I Never Cry is an endearingly spiky girl's odyssey from Poland to Ireland, and back again. In a striking debut, Zofia Stafiej sets about repatriating her late father's body from Dublin, and finding herself along the way.

Right from the first few minutes, it is hard to not to feel immediately taken with Ola (Zofia Stafiej), the 17-year-old protagonist of Piotr Domalewski's *I Never Cry*. In the middle of her third driving test, Ola makes a sudden swerve as she tries to avoid a dangerous turn from another driver, much to the displeasure of her examiner. She gets out of her vehicle and proceeds to stop the other car, kicking off its front number plate. This might sound bratty and annoying, but Stafiej, in her acting debut, portrays a kind of endearingly headstrong spirit that makes the scene play out like a very contemporary type of farce. As the film progresses, it becomes clear Ola is simply not someone who follows instructions. After receiving the news that her estranged father, a migrant worker in Dublin, has died in a work incident, she embarks on a lone odyssey from Poland to Ireland to retrieve his body and – more importantly – her share of whatever money the man has left. Throughout this journey, as Ola worms her way through bureaucracy and learns about who her father was, her edges are softened. Her coming-of-age feels full circle: the film might begin with a physical burst of frustration, but it ends with an emotional rupture that proves especially moving. Besides covering familiar terrain of family conflict – Ola is constantly bristling at her mother's demands – the film also acutely captures the plight of migrant workers, questioning the supposed homogeneity of contemporary Europe. It is also refreshing to see a young woman behaving badly while remaining sympathetic, an onscreen privilege usually only granted to their male counterparts. This is an enjoyable rollercoaster of absurdities and poignancy, and a marvellous showcase for Stafiej's talent.

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