

A SOANDBRAD AND PARTS AND LABOR PRODUCTION

treeless mountain

나무없는산

A FILM BY So Yong Kim

 59th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum

TORONTO
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2008

Logo Pusan

treeless mountain 나무없는산

"An impressive film with a life-affirming conclusion."
VARIETY

"A movie about the harshness, the strangeness and beauty of life as experienced in everyday circumstances by ordinary people. *Treeless Mountain* has an uncanny ability to enlarge your perception of the world." A.O. SCOTT, NEW YORK TIMES

Cast

JIN Hee Yeon Kim
BIN Song Hee Kim
MOM Soo Ah Lee
BIG AUNT Mi Hyang Kim
GRANDMA Boon Tak Park

89 MINUTES | COLOR
KOREAN | 35MM | 1.85
DOLBY SR 5.1

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A FILM BY So Yong Kim

PRODUCERS

Bradley Rust Gray
Ben Howe
Lars Knudsen
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So Yong Kim

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Ian McGloin
Jamie Mai
Charlie Ledley

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Anne Misawa

EDITORS

So Yong Kim
Bradley Rust Gray

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

See Hee Kim

SOUND

Eric Offin /
Tandem Sound

ORIGINAL SCORE

Asobi Seksu



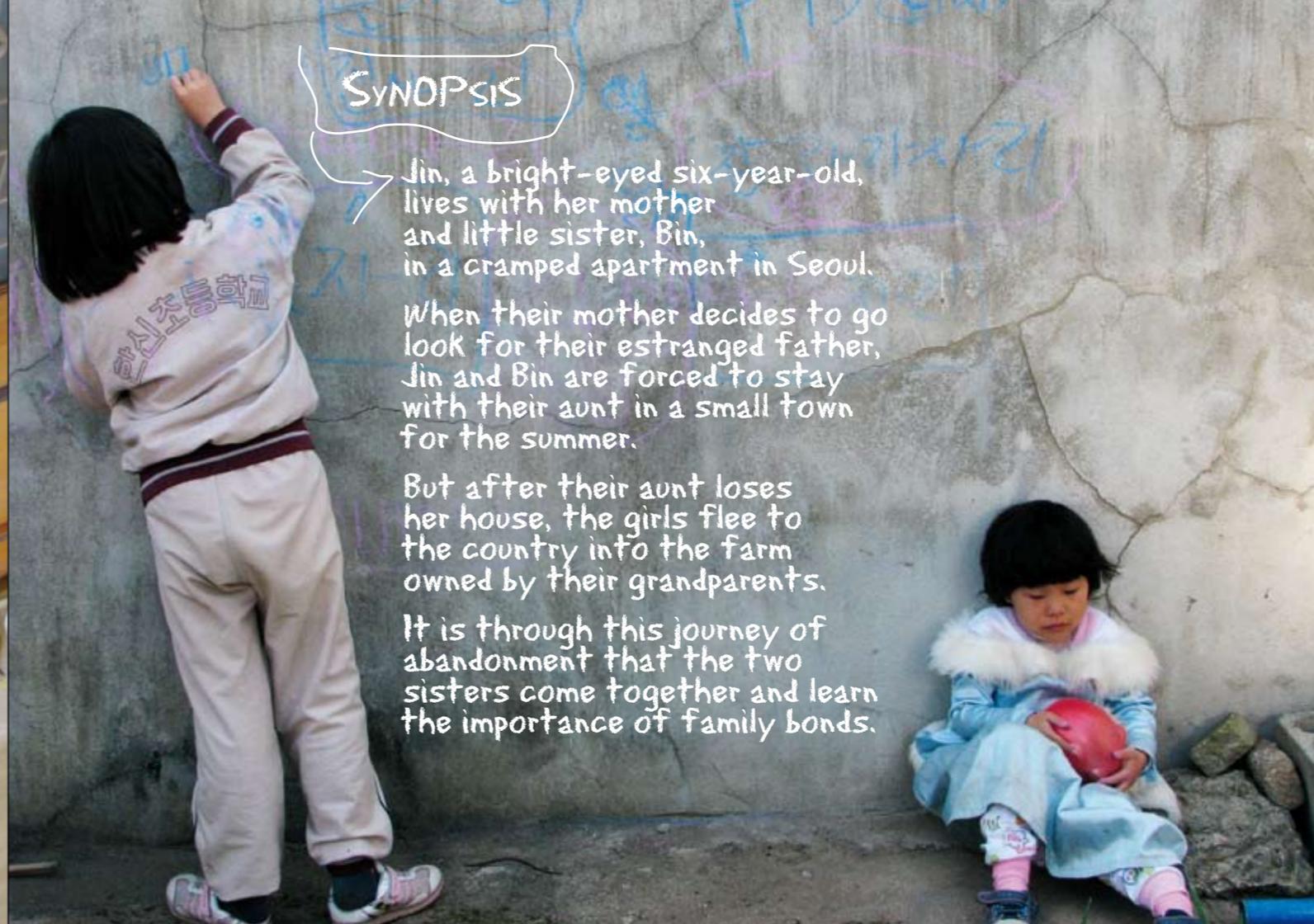
SYNOPSIS

Jin, a bright-eyed six-year-old, lives with her mother and little sister, Bin, in a cramped apartment in Seoul.

When their mother decides to go look for their estranged father, Jin and Bin are forced to stay with their aunt in a small town for the summer.

But after their aunt loses her house, the girls flee to the country into the farm owned by their grandparents.

It is through this journey of abandonment that the two sisters come together and learn the importance of family bonds.



STATEMENT FROM THE DIRECTOR SO YONG KIM

TREELESS MOUNTAIN is inspired by events from my early childhood in Pusan, Korea. My mother divorced our father and left us with our grandparents on a rice farm. She immigrated to America in order to find a better life for herself and to build a future for her children. At the time of these events we were too young to understand and our mother did not tell us what was happening. I began writing the film to search for certain lost memories from this period of my life and also as a letter to my mother.

As the story began to take shape, Jin, the main character, took on her own distinctive personality and blossomed. As the writing progressed, the story and the characters began to separate from actual events from my life. Jin's emotional and physical journey became the main force of the story. As in the case of the Aimie character in **IN BETWEEN DAYS**, I used my personal memories and experience as the starting point to develop Jin, and then allowed her to dictate her own journey.

TREELESS MOUNTAIN is a simple story about a six-year-old girl, Jin, and her journey to early maturity. Jin's sensitivity and the complexity of the emotions stem from her desire to have her family life back. She must let go of everything she has known in order to persevere. In this sense **TREELESS MOUNTAIN** is an intimate portrait of a young girl and a classic coming-of-age story. I wanted to tell the story of Jin in order to celebrate her resilience in life.

"Treeless Mountain is a heart-breaking story; naturalistic, almost documentary-like, this films from the other side of the world will connect with audiences wherever it is shown." CNN

"Simultaneously simple and complex, Treeless Mountain rings true on every level." THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"Kim understands that simplicity and clarity hold the utmost power and has elicited some of the finest child performances in recent memory. The film will take your breath away." HAMMER TO NAIL

"A beautifully crafted and a gorgeous movie, with vibrant cinematography, that is teeming with compassion." INDIEWIRE



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

About The Cast

The most important and difficult task in making the film was finding the two leads.

In order to cast Jin, we visited 14 elementary schools and kindergartens in Seoul City. When I first met Hee Yeon Kim, who plays Jin in the film, I had this gut feeling that she was the one. When I approached her in the school's cafeteria, she told me it was her dream to have a younger sister. After that she corrected my poor Korean. I fell for her completely.

In June of 2007, Song Hee's picture was e-mailed to us by our assistant who was working on a community project for her university which involved visiting orphanages in the out-skirts of Seoul. When I saw the photographs I wanted to meet Song Hee because of her amazing smile. We drove three hours from Seoul to meet her at Wonjoo Children's House. We auditioned Song Hee along with her housemates.

Song Hee, despite being the youngest in a group of girls, was the most focused and intuitive. She did not shy away nor did she try to impress us. In addition to her bright smile, her face portrayed an intensity rarely seen in a five-year-old.

The two girls met for the first time a week before we started shooting in Seoul at a noodle restaurant. They became fast sisters, sharing and fighting throughout the production.

"The pacing is pitch perfect and the filmmaker works wonders with the child actors, who appear relaxed and natural in front of a camera that is nearly on top of them." SCREEN

Locations

Big Aunt's town and Grandma's farm are both located in and around my hometown, Hunghae. It was my dream to shoot the film there. We found the farm through a distant aunt who still had connections in town.

Production and post-production

Before we began production I decided that I would talk with the girls during each take. They didn't read the script and didn't know the details of the scenes until the moment we were shooting. I usually fed them lines and asked them to do specific things while the camera was rolling. This process helped to keep them engaged. Although some of the scenes required multiple takes and few were heavily scripted, I tried to capture the two girls' spontaneous interactions and natural moments as much as possible.

Final Thoughts

I dreamt of making **TREELESS MOUNTAIN** even before my first feature, **IN BETWEEN DAYS**. Five years ago, when I first started writing the story, I felt that I didn't have enough skills as a filmmaker nor the confidence to begin. Also, because of the film's intense personal nature, I needed more time to de-personalize the story and to develop the characters more. In the meantime I saw two films with young non-actors playing lead roles: **PONETTE** and **NOBODY KNOWS**. These films made me think that making **TREELESS MOUNTAIN** with young girls would be possible.

The most amazing thing that happened in our lives since making **IN BETWEEN DAYS** was that we had our baby daughter, Sky. For some reason, after I became a mother, I wanted to tell this story even more.

Bios

SO YONG KIM – Writer/ Director

TREELESS MOUNTAIN is So Yong Kim's second feature film. The script received support from the Cannes Atelier Program, the Sundance Institute's Writers and Directors Labs, and the Pusan Promotion Plan.

Kim's first feature, **IN BETWEEN DAYS**, was acclaimed by critics and won the Special Jury Prize at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival along with the International Critics' Prize in Berlin. It was also awarded an LA Critics' Prize, as well as Best Film and Best Actress Prizes at Buenos Aires Film Festival. Kino International and the Sundance Channel released the film in North America.

So Yong Kim was born in Pusan, South Korea and immigrated to the US when she was twelve. She studied painting, performance, and video art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she earned her MFA. She has made several experimental short films including **A BUNNY RABBIT**, shot by renowned cinematographer Christopher Doyle. Kim also produced Bradley Rust Gray's award-winning Icelandic feature, **SALT**, in 2003. In 2006, Kim was featured as one of the "25 Filmmakers to Watch" in Filmmaker Magazine.

"An unsentimental and delicately observed portrayal. The film never topples into melodrama, and musters a tremendous sense of pathos, in no small part due to the tremendously affecting performances of its two child actors." GAVIN SMITH, FILM COMMENT

"It has so much in common with 'Nobody Knows' that it's hard not to compare. Treeless Mountain nails better the cinematic representation of a child's perspective." AARON HILLIS, VILLAGE VOICE

"Treeless Mountain features adorable Korean kids pining for their absent mom. It works on you, but shamelessly." TIME OUT

BRADLEY RUST GRAY – Producer

Bradley Rust Gray also produced So Yong Kim's **IN BETWEEN DAYS**.

Gray's first narrative feature, **SALT**, was filmed in Iceland and won the Caligari Film Prize for Innovative Filmmaking in Berlin in 2003. It was selected for over 20 international film festivals and won three more international awards. The film was released on Sundance Channel in the US. Gray's short film **HITCH** won an award at Sundance in 2000 and was selected as one of the "Best Films of the Year" in Film Comment Magazine. He recently completed production on his second feature, **THE EXPLODING GIRL**, starring Zoe Kazan and Mark Rendall.

s a Fulbright scholar who has received graduate degrees from both USC and the British Film Institute in London. His undergraduate work focused on architecture, sculpture, and experimental filmmaking, with a degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.





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