

## SONG Il-gon



# Knife • Kal

**Feature** 35mm 110 min.

**Budget**

US\$7,000,000  
(HK\$54,600,000)

**Producers**

OH Jung-wan  
Eugene LEE

**Production Company**

b.o.m. Film Productions

**HAF Goal**

Funds

### ■ Introduction ■

On a beautiful spring day in 1980, an irreversible tragedy occurs in Kwangju province. 25 years later, a policeman is brought back to his hometown in Kwangju by the memories of his missing father. Thus begins the protagonist's odyssey to solve the mystery of his father's death. Entangled in a web of shady underworld characters in Japan and Korea, the past becomes as enigmatic as the Spinx' riddles. Distinguished for his artistic achievement in *Flower Island* (2001) and *Spider Forest* (2004), Song Il-gon's tackles a sensitive and painful chapter in Korean history by borrowing from the structure of the mystery genre and Greek mythology (*Oedipus Rex* and *The Odyssey*).

### ■ Director ■

**SONG Il-gon** was born in Seoul, Korea in 1971. He studied Filmmaking at the Seoul Arts Institute in 1994, and furthered his education at the Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in 2002.

From 1994-1999, he made a number of shorts, many of which won prizes at home and abroad. Of these, *Picnic* (1999) won the Cannes Grand Prix (Short), Best Short at 48th Melbourne IFF and 6th Barcelona IFF and Jury Special Prize at Aspen IFF.

In 2001, Song Il-gon screened his first feature *Flower Island* at Pusan, and won the top honor, the New Currents Award, as well as the Fipresci and PSB Audience awards. At Venice 2001, it was named Best First Film, and in 2002, it won both Fipresci prize and Special Mention in Fribourg. Song's second feature *Spider Forest* (2004) has been well received at festivals, such as Tokyo Filmex and Hong Kong IFF.

### ■ Producers ■

**OH Jung-wan** was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1964. She is one of the new generation producers who modernized the way films are made in Korea. During a decade of filmmaking for, among others, Sincine and Nine Film, she produced some of Korea's bestselling classics, like *The Wedding Story* (1992),

*The Gingko Bed* (1996), *The Letter* (1997) and *An Affair* (1998). She formed b.o.m. Film Productions in 1999, and continues to produce highly successful films that both keep up with and challenge developments in Korean cinema and society. These include: Kim Jee-Woo's *The Foul King* (2000), which screened at Toronto, Berlin, Hong Kong, Hawaii, Karlovy Vary, Deauville, Fantas Porto and New York; Im Sang-Soo's *Tears*, one of the projects featured in the inaugural HAF 2000; *Memories*, the Korean segment of *Three* (2002), directed by Kim Jee-Woon; *H* (2002), directed by Lee Jong-Hyuk; two hugely popular horror films in 2003: *A Tale of Two Sisters* by Kim Jee-Woon and *The Uninvited* by Lee Soo-Youn; EJ-Yong's sumptuous period film *Untold Scandal*, featured in HAF 2003; and most recently, *Cut*, the Korean segment of *Three Extremes* (2004), the follow-up to *Three*. *Cut* is directed by Cannes awardwinner, Park Chan-Wook, director of *JSA*, *Sympathy for Mr Vengeance* and *Old Boy*.

Oh Jung-wan is now in production for Kim Jee-Woon's latest film *A Bittersweet Life*.

**Eugene LEE** was born in Seoul, Korea in 1968. From 1991-1997, she was a copywriter, and Creative Director for the advertising agency Korad. She won the Korean Advertising Award Grand Prix in 1995. She was Marketing Director for EJ-Yong's debut feature *An Affair* (1998). Since then, she has been Producer for several big productions, all of which achieved critical and box office success at home and abroad: *Secret Tears* (2000) by Park Ki-hyung, *The Uninvited* (2003) by Lee Soo-Youn, *Untold Scandal* (2003) by EJ-Yong, and *Cut*, the Korean segment of *Three Extremes* (2004) by Park Chan-wook. She is currently working on Kim Jee-woon's latest film *A Bittersweet Life* as Executive Producer.

### ■ Production Company ■

**b.o.m. Film Productions** was established in 1999 in Seoul. "b.o.m." stands for spring, which brings nature to life and the company strives to produce novel and interesting films that meet the audience's evolving needs. It plans and develops all the creative elements of the film, from casting to marketing

and publishing, as well as coordination of international co-productions and distribution of ongoing projects.

Among its impressive lineup are: *An Affair* (1998), *The Foul King* (2000), which screened at eight international festivals, *Tears* (2001), *Memories*, the Korean segment of *Three* (2002), directed by Kim Jee-Woon; *H* (2002), *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003), *The Uninvited* (2003), and *Untold Scandal* (2003).

## ■ Synopsis ■

Spring, 1980. Korea is still ruled by military dictatorship. On May, 23, in Kwangju, the blood of innocent citizens is spilled in the struggle for democracy. A bus heading down a country road is stopped by an airborne unit. One by one, people are shot down. Kang Chi Su, a petty officer is ordered to take aim at his neighbor, who is a survivor of the gunfire. Kang Chi Su blows his top and aims his muzzle at the senior officer who gave the order.

Spring, 2005. Kang Min is an officer in the homicide unit. Due to his hot temper and past history of violence, he has been demoted from his police station in Seoul to take up a post in Kwangju. Though it is his hometown, he has lived with his adoptive mother in Seoul all his life. Soon afterwards, he gets a report that the skeletal remains of his long-lost father have been uncovered somewhere in Kwangju. Min's father has been missing for 25 years. Min's is driven to dig up his buried past.

A receipt from the pawnshop is found among the remains. The old man at the shop gives Min a knife his father had left behind for 25 years. Inside the case that holds the knife is another clue: a postcard of Osaka Castle, the name of a woman, Song Mi Na, and her address. Min goes to Osaka, but discovers that Song Mi Na is already dead.

He meets a Japanese woman, Saori, who used to know Mi Na well. He also gets two new leads related to his father – a mid-ranking Yakuza boss named Ichiro, who was married to Song Mi Na, and Kim Chul Wan, a Korean close to Ichiro, who has one ear missing. Both men have disappeared. Then he learns from Kim's daughter Jeong Lee that her father might be in Korea.

Back in Kwangju, Min is confronted with more startling news. A month ago, Kim Chul Wan's body has been found around Mokpo beach. Min finds crucial evidence – a Rolex watch. Using the serial number, he traces its owner to the president of a construction company, and here's the twist – his name is also Kim Chul Wan.

A further revelation follows – Jeong Lee, arriving in Korea to claim her father's body, identifies President Kim as Ichiro. Guessing that Ichiro has adopted the real Kim Chul Wan's name, Min is convinced that he holds the key to all the unsolved mysteries about his father's and the real Kim's death.

By chance, Min meets President Kim (Ichiro)'s daughter Su In. He senses something suspicious about her. Then an eye-witness claims to have seen her at the scene of Kim Chul Wan's murder.

Though confused by the complex web of uncertain clues and shady relationships, there is no stopping Min from getting the bottom of truth.

## ■ Director's Statement ■

This movie is like the long journey that Odysseus takes, where a son searches for his father. Every son has a father, and regardless of whether that father is the object of hatred or the respect, he has a great influence on the life of his son. The father of the main character, Min Kang, disappears without a word when Min was a baby, and comes back to him as skeletal remains, when Min is an adult. Min then starts a long, weary journey in search of traces of his missing father. The two become a part of the unique Korean historical experience, the Kwangju struggle for democracy, which distorts their individual histories. Basically, this is a story of a son and father who are victims of history.

The movie is about a man who attempts to bring back his father's life; in order to unravel his story as well as his strong character, it occurred to me that the mystery genre would be appropriate. Just as the tip of an iceberg grows bigger as you try to dig it up, I wish to show that the more the son tries to find out what kind of person his father was, and how he was brought to his death, the mystery just intensifies. I also want to express how Korea's past weighs on Korea's present, through the father's disappearance and death, which was sparked off by the tragedy known as "Kwangju's Struggle for Democracy." Two truths are discovered in his search. First, like Oedipus' wretched memories of patricide, the father-son relationship is divided by something that prevents them from co-existing. Secondly, Korea is incomplete because it still isn't reconciled to its past.

To tell these two stories, I will borrow the mystery structure from yet another tragedy that begins at the point where Min ends his long journey.

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