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철원기행

Cheol won gi haeng

End of Winter

Kim Dae-hwan

Producer Lee Im-kul. **Production company** Tiger Cinema (Seoul, South Korea). **Director** Kim Dae-hwan. **Screenplay** Park Jin-soo. **Director of photography** Kim Bo-lam. **Production design** Ahn So-hyun. **Sound** Lee Ho-won. **Music** Kang Min-kuk. **Cast** Moon Chang-gil (Kim Sung-geun), Lee Young-lan (Yoon Yeo-jeong), Kim Min-hyuk (Kim Dong-uk), Lee Sang-hee (Kang Hye-jeong), Heo Je-wone (Kim Su-hyun).

DCP, colour. 99 min. Korean.

Premiere 2 October 2014, Busan International Film Festival
World sales Lotte Entertainment

Sung-geun, a teacher at Cheolwon Technical High School, is retiring. His two sons and a daughter-in-law arrive to take part in the celebrations with their parents. During a meal, Sung-geun announces that he is to file for divorce. The news freezes the expressions on the faces of his wife and children. It is just as icy in the provincial town of Cheolwon, where busses are not running due to a snowstorm. The family is quite literally stuck where they are. Although Kim Dae-hwan's directorial debut only takes place over few days, the film tells the family's entire story. The years that have gone by are very visible in the parents' apartment. The cramped rooms make apparent that there has been no intimacy within its walls for a long time now. The camera continually takes a step back, turning each shot into a precise still life of feelings that no longer exist or perhaps never did. Isn't the father's outburst also an utopian gesture? He's already found a new place to live and cooks the potatoes that he grew in his very own garden. This too is a way of being a provider, as a family begins to rediscover itself.

Anke Leweke

The meaning of family today

The family is the primary and the most intimate network of human relationships. In modern society, however, the family is not only taken for granted, but family members act negligently towards each other. For some people, their family relationships are the closest ones they have, but for others, they can be the most distance ones. Through *Cheol won gi haeng*, I wanted to think about the meaning of family today, and to invite the audience to think about their own family.

Kim Dae-hwan

"There is no such thing as happy family"

Why did you choose to focus on the family?

Kim Dae-hwan: I'm from Chuncheon [the capital of the South Korean province of Gangwon-do -Ed.]. My family has lived apart ever since I came to Seoul to attend Hongik University in Seoul and my brother, seven years younger than me, moved to Seoul to study for university entrance exam. Even before that, I remember my parents living apart from each other in different cities because they're both teachers, like the family in the film, and they were assigned to positions in different schools. Living apart from each other made me question the meaning of family, and this is something I'm presently most interested in.

How did you come to think about the set up of the film, where a family, living apart from each other, gets stuck with each other in a small house in Cheolwon in the middle of the winter?

When my mother was working as a teacher in Cheolwon five or six years ago, I once went to visit her with my father. It wasn't comfortable as the three of us slept under one blanket in her small studio apartment.

Can you talk about Sung-geun's sudden remark about divorcing his wife after the retirement ceremony?

In the film, the father has been living in Cheolwon and the mother in Chuncheon for a long time. The father feels that he's ready to start a new life, now that his sons are all grown up. Divorce is like Sung-geun's declaration of a new life.

The family is unable to understand their father, who remains silent until the end.

I talked a lot about family with Lee Im-kul and Park Jin-soo, the producer and screenwriter of the film. We all agreed that Korean fathers are really blunt and lacking expression. Rather than sharing their thoughts before they act, they act out right away. Sung-geun in the film is the typical Korean father figure.

During the uncomfortable three-day stay at the father's house, the problems of each family member arise, including the mother, who's angry about her husband's announcement of wanting to divorce her; the eldest son's family, which needs money; and the second son, who needs to buy a house before his wedding. However, no one is able to resolve anything.

I thought it portrayed the typical Korean family. One thinks that family can be open to each other and expose everything to each other, but that's actually not true. You can talk about your problems with a friend over a drink, but not with your parents. Families also have complaints about each other. You might be

able to talk about it and resolve it, but other problems surface again. So there is no such thing as a 'happy family without problems'. The family is a continuation of problems.

There aren't any major incidents in the film, yet it powerfully grasps you until the end.

There are many characters in the film; however, they're not exposed from the beginning, but their relationship to each other is gradually revealed. The family in *Cheol won gi haeng* seems like a normal family in the first scene, but their problems surface as the film progresses.

It's impressive that the film demonstrates simple images without fancy technique, and the editing is bold in that it cuts out decisive passages in the film.

Cheol won gi haeng is my graduation work from graduate school, the School of Film and Digital Contents of Dankook University. I wanted to eliminate any use of dramatic effects as much as I could, because the film captures a portrayal of the family in reality. I concluded that the camera needed to be fixed and stable, in order to faithfully capture the actors' performances. In that sense, I'm inspired by Hirokazu Koreeda's films.

Jang Sung-ran, *Magazine M*, 3 October 2014



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Kim Dae-hwan was born in Chuncheon, in the province of Kang-won in South Korea, in 1985. He studied film and digital media design at Hongik University in Seoul from 2005 until 2012. He then studied at the Graduate School of Cinematic Content of Dankook University in Yongin, South Korea until 2014. While a student, Kim directed two short films, *Picnic* (2011, 25 min.) and *Interview* (2012, 30 min.). *Cheol won gi haeng* is his first full-length feature film.