

FAMILY AFFAIR FILMS
presents

*ON
THE
EDGE
OF THE LAKE*

a film by HYO SOON KAAG



production details

A young boy is lying on a bed in a dimly lit room, looking up. The room has a warm, orange glow. The boy is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. He is lying on his back, with his arms crossed over his chest. The background shows a doorway and a window with a patterned curtain.

Director **Hyo Soon Kaag**

Length in minutes **90 minutes**

Genre **Coming-of-age drama set in the 90s**

Theme **Adoption**

Countries of production (as of now) **The Netherlands**

Spoken languages **Dutch**

Distributor Benelux **September Film**

Film status **In finance**

Logline

The adopted Soo-Ji (15) and her brother Manuel (17) are a striking appearance in the white Dutch village they live in. Although Soo-Ji feels part of the community, Manuel struggles with his identity. His search for his roots effect Soo-Ji too, who starts to discover a part of herself she denied for a long time.



synopsis

Late '90s. Soo-Ji (15) lives with her brother Manuel (17) and their parents in a small village at the edge of a lake. Soo-Ji has long dark hair and almond-shaped eyes. Manuel has dark skin and frizzy black hair. They make a remarkable appearance compared to their parents, who have blue eyes and blond hair, which also goes for everyone else in the village.

Soo-Ji and Manuel grow up in a warm, loving family but their relationship is a rocky one. While Manuel is exploring his roots, Soo-Ji tries hard to ignore every aspect of her cultural background. She does her best to fit in with her blonde friends, but the feeling of being different increases overtime. Comments that Soo-Ji didn't notice in the past now draw her attention and become hurtful.

As Soo-Ji starts to struggle with her identity, Manuel loses control when he gets discriminated at the local bar. When he later, during a family gathering, opens up about his longing feelings towards his Colombian roots, his words make a big impression on Soo-Ji.

Soo-Ji's urge to explore her own cultural heritage grows, but she gets frustrated as she doesn't know where to look and every attempt to find any form of recognition fails. Slowly, she feels herself drifting away from the world she once felt so comfortable in. But when she feels most vulnerable, it's her brother of all people that comes to help. At that moment all her pain and grief comes out, allowing her to make a connection with her brother for the very first time.

artistic statement - hyo soon kaag

My memories are the base of the story. I was ten months old when I left South-Korea and became part of a family with white parents and two brothers, adopted from Indonesia and Colombia. I grew up in a small village at the IJsselmeer in the Netherlands. I did my best to fit in and was accepted by the community, because I behaved 'normal'. I was one of them, but at the same time I always felt a little bit like an outsider. I didn't have any role models that were relevant for me. No Koreans or other Asians who could share some insights about my cultural heritage I could be proud of. No one who could prepare me for the rude and hurtful things people would say to me, just because of my looks. The only 'foreigners' I knew were my brothers, whom I wasn't very close with. I didn't understand my older brother who struggled with his identity and heritage. More than once he ended up in a fight because he was discriminated. I thought he overreacted, I blamed him for his troubles and wondered why he couldn't just act normal, like I did. Or at least like I pretended.



artistic statement - hyo soon kaag



On the Edge of the Lake tells a story about growing up and discovering yourself as a human being. It's about family, siblings that fight, hate and love each other, and parents who do their best to help their children, even though they don't know how to. We get to know Soo-Ji as she discovers a part of herself that she didn't know was inside her. She struggles as she feels herself drifting away from the world she knows and she once felt so comfortable in. Her brother struggles too, in his own way, and although she doesn't understand him at first, she eventually becomes inspired by him.

Family comes in different shapes and sizes and I think it is very important to show that the blood bond isn't the main key to form one. My family isn't traditional or standard. It's messy and unconventional, but yet relatable for lots of people in so many ways. I hope that I can show a new point of view on family and adoption. To take away the mystery and magic, show the harsh reality and inspire (young) people to embrace the things that make them stand out.

artistic statement - hyo soon kaag

A typical Dutch village with farmhouses, dusty bulb sheds, green dikes and brown pubs will be characteristic in the film, where the spirit of the times is palpable but not dominant. We work with contrasts between the locations, giving each place a different look and feel. In this way we create different continents within Soo-Ji's world, each of which has its own function.

I want to transport the audience into Soo-Ji's world, which feels open and carefree at the start of the film but becomes increasingly oppressive. The audience briefly becomes part of the community in the small village, where Soo-Ji slowly becomes aware of her position and where the urge to discover herself awakens.

By using wide frames, natural light, existing locations and partly non-actors, I want to strengthen the feeling of realism and authenticity. I want to set up the visualization in a way where Soo-Ji's story is both visually stunning and emotionally resonant, allowing the viewer to get close to her and put themselves in her shoes.



artistic statement - hyo soon kaag

Particularly for the cinematography, I am inspired by the film *Nomadland* (Cloé Zhou, 2020). The wide frames, which make the environment always part of the story, and the use of natural light are in line with my vision for *On the Edge of the Lake*.



The film *L'Evenement* (Audrey Diwan, 2021) also offers a great source of inspiration, especially for cinematography. I really like how close we get to the main character by always walking with her, where her posture and pace tells a lot about her state of mind.

When the main character is in a group, the viewer always remains connected to her through subtle views.

The film *Minari* (Lee Isaac Chung, 2020) shows a powerful story of 'misfits' within a closed community that is fully implemented in the visualization. I think the warmth of the family that is reflected in the interior of the trailer in which they live is a special element, contrasted with the emptiness of the lawn where the trailer is located, which immediately makes them small and insignificant. I also see Soo-Ji's family's home as warm and cozy and I can imagine that we will be looking for a home with lots of space around it, perhaps overlooking a meadow.

The 90s are strongly felt as a throwback in *Mid 90s* (Jonah Hill, 2018). While it is really used here as an ode to that time, *Aftersun* (Charlotte Wells, 2022) has a more subtle way of making the '90s part of the story. The spirit of the times plays an important role in both films for the story and how the characters develop, which I find very beautiful and experience as recognizable for myself. For *On the Edge of the Lake* we aim for a middle ground between these two films, where the feeling of nostalgia will not be used very strongly, but will be palpable at a glance.

positioning

On the Edge of the Lake is an atmospheric and subtle coming-of-age film with strong social relevance. The arthouse film tells the story about intercountry adoption, a subject that seemed taboo in the media for a long time, but which is now finally receiving more attention. *On the Edge of the Lake* is not a story about a adoptee in search of her biological parents. It is a film about growing up and discovering who you are, it is about what it is like to grow up in a community where you always look and feel 'different'. About dealing with seemingly innocent comments which make you feel like an outsider.

The layered film communicates this message with a strong visual style that takes the viewer back in time. The popular culture from the mid-90s is visually appealing and will make it a playful film. By telling an important underexposed story in a setting like this, the film will be socially relevant as well as accessible and entertaining. The strength of *On the Edge of the Lake* lies in its capacity to evoke a universal sense of growing up and embracing individuality. This is achieved through its visually captivating and nostalgic atmosphere.

target audience

The primary target group are millennials, between 25 and 40 years old, possibly with a migration background, living in the city, theoretically trained. They have a large social life and move in mixed environment circles, visit entertainment venues and enjoy going to music or film festivals. They delve into their cultural heritage and prefer arthouse films above the big blockbusters.. They watch films such as *After Sun*, *Girl* and *Lady Bird*.

Our secondary target group consists of Gen Z, between the ages of 17 and 24, possibly with a multicultural background. They are in their last year of high school or studying, most likely a theoretical course.

The tertiary target group: people between 15 and 80 years old, who have been adopted themselves, who have adopted children, or who want to adopt. Men and women, different ages, place of residence, education levels.

director's & screenwriter's biography

hyo soon kaag

Hyo Soon Kaag graduated from the Utrecht School of the Arts (HKU) in 2014 with a focus on screenplay and directing, with the short film BINNEN VIER MUREN. It won several awards at the Eindhoven Film Festival and the Leiden International Short Film Festival. That same year she realized the short film DOUBLE FASSE, as part of the Follow Gent project.

In 2015 she received a development grant for beginning screenwriters for her project VIOLETTA from the Netherlands Film Fund. She wrote and directed the short film KINSHASA (2016) and the single play KRASSEN (2021). She is currently writing her first feature film ON THE EDGE OF THE LAKE, with support from the Netherlands Film Fund.

Between 2017 and 2020 she worked on a project basis for ROSE stories, a social enterprise with a focus on diversity and since 2019 she has been working as a policy officer for the Dutch Academy For Film (DAFF).



company profile: family affair films

Family Affair Films is a film production company based in Amsterdam. We produce high-quality, artistic, topical and contemporary television drama, creative documentaries, animation and feature films with a strong author-driven vision. We develop projects with new talent and we nurture our relationships with established filmmakers.

Steve McQueen's documentary OCCUPIED CITY (2023) premiered in the official selection of Cannes and recently screened at Telluride. The Dutch premiere of the film will take place during the 26th edition of IDFA. THREE MINUTES - A LENGTHENING (2021) a documentary by Bianca Stigter premiered in Venice in 2021 and was selected for Toronto, Telluride and IDFA and Sundance.

Furthermore, their slate include features such as SPLENDID ISOLATION (IFFR 2022) by Urszula Antoniak, BLOODY MARIE (IFFR 2019) by Guido van Driel, LIGHT AS FEATHERS (Toronto 2018) by Rosanne Pel and BEYOND WORDS by Urszula Antoniak (Toronto & San Sebastian 2017).

Fall 2023, WHEN WE LOST FROM THE GERMANS, Guido van Driel's third feature film, and ZOMERVACHT, Joren Molter's debut film, premiered in cinemas.





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