



desert

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Writer/Director : Stephen Kang
Producers : Leanne Saunders, Matt Noonan
Production Company : Severe Features, Curious Film
Running Time : 82 minutes
Format : HD
Production Country : New Zealand
Language : English, Korean

World Premiere : 2010 Pusan International Film Festival

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SYNOPSIS

One Line

A newly pregnant young Asian woman living in the city of Auckland, New Zealand is made to fend for herself when her Kiwi boyfriend disappears before they sign the marriage certificate.

One Paragraph

Jenny, an Asian woman in her late twenties, lives with her New Zealand boyfriend in a small apartment in Auckland. When they find out Jenny is pregnant, her boyfriend seems willing to get a marriage certificate for her. On the day they are to perform a quick formal ceremony in a registry office, he doesn't turn up. None of their old peers seem to know of her boyfriend's whereabouts, but Jenny stubbornly tries to find him. Jenny's world becomes increasingly more isolated, and she forced to look inside herself – and the new life there forming - for answers.

SYNOPSIS

One Page

Jenny, an Asian woman in her late twenties, lives with her New Zealand boyfriend, James, in a small apartment in Auckland. Her daily routine simple and humble as she travels back and forth between her works at a Korean video rental store and her cramped, inner city apartment. Occasionally she has lunch with her boyfriend but that is all.

When Jenny finds out she is pregnant, James seems willing to get a marriage certificate for the sake of her visa. On the day they are to perform a quick formal ceremony in a registry office, James doesn't turn up. No one knows of James' whereabouts, but Jenny stubbornly tries to find him.

Rumors spread fast in small communities, especially the bad ones. It is big taboo for a young Korean woman to get pregnant before marriage. Jenny is soon rejected by her Korean church community for not setting the children she's been teaching a good example. She is once again alone.

While at work she meets a debt collector from a local Korean magazine, Joon, who is trying to track down the boss of the Korean video rental store Jenny works at. Joon, a slightly dodgy debt collector, tries to get friendly with Jenny putting it to her he can help track down her runaway boyfriend. Little by little, Jenny gets sucked into Joon's money driven world and witnesses his growing problems with managing his debts and creditors.

Now spending much of their time together, they form an alliance and their unlikely friendship grows. Joon slowly opens up to Jenny, shows her his other side. So exposed he also lets it be known he covets Jenny. It is here, they both realise their friendship will not last much longer.

After all the leads have dried up, Jenny is forced to stop looking for her runaway boyfriend and return to her normal life. Jenny realises not only is her body changing but also people's perception of her. Jenny's world has become even more isolated, and she forced to look inside herself - and the new life there forming - for answers.

Writer/ Director Statement

1) The automated ring of a shop doorway sounds off.

An Asian woman in her early thirties and a girl, around six years old, entered the liquor store I worked at. They were holding each other's hands tightly.

The woman bought a bottle of water. The kid kept staring at me with her blue eyes like I had something on my face. I gave her a lolly. Her eyes kept staring at me in spite of the lolly, until her mom dragged her out of the store.

2) When I was waiting to meet a friend in the city later, across the street I could see a woman and girl walking away. They were carrying travel luggage but still holding each other's hands. Tirelessly going up the hill.

These are two images I've been contemplating for quite some time. Are they the same woman and kid? I don't know. But it triggers a chain of images for me.

There are large numbers of 1.5 generation (who came with their parents in New Zealand) now getting married here. In the short 30 years after the immigration boom of the early 90s New Zealand Koreans have now reached a point of adulthood in their lives.

I've witnessed many happy couples, but their marriages often fall short. And some of them end up being grim and brutal. The subject of Korean woman having babies with Westerners or even worse out of wedlock is a subject not openly talking about or mentioned, even within the Korean community. And I don't think many people are even aware of this kind of story.

From time to time the mass media spits out news about an overstaying mother who needs to decide whether she abandons her child to the NZ authorities, where her offspring can gain adoption and a good education, or return to Korea, where as a single mother with a non Korean child life will be a struggle. We are simply too ignorant about the pain and what these women suffer. However Desert is not simply a social statement, it is concerned with observing a normal person and following their journey both emotionally and physically.

My intention in making Desert is to share an immigrant story that is personal and honest. I'm trying to observe Jenny as much as I can without any judgment or prejudice. With that in mind, I tried to create an intimate character study of a woman who is going through the process of adapting to life and her changing body in these circumstances. Although Jenny's experience is unique to her situation, her pain and her interaction with other people is universal.

Lead Cast

Jane Kim 'Jenny'

Jane Kim was born in Germany to Korean parents, her parents moved back to Seoul when she was four. She moved with her family in 1996 to New Zealand and settled there. She is currently studying for a Bachelor of Pharmacy at Auckland University.

Desert is her first experience acting for the screen.

Andrew Han 'Joon'

Andrew was born in Korea and moved with his family to New Zealand in 1995. He studied Computer Science at Auckland University.

Andrew was the lead role in Stephen Kang's debut feature Dream Preserved (1996).

Marek Sumich 'James'

Marek has trained with leading improvisation and physical theatre practitioners Inside Out Theatre. His film credits include Niki Caro's Memory and Desire and her Cannes nominated short film Sure to Rise. Recent short films include award winning short animation Poppy. Television credits include Legend of The Seeker, Hercules and Xena.

Director

Stephen Kang

Born in Seoul, Korea, Stephen moved to New Zealand in 1993. Stephen Kang studied video art, performance and time based art and earned a BFA at the Elam, school of Art in Auckland University.

Armed with a Fine Art background and design experience, Kang completed his experimental digital feature Dream Preserved in 2006. Awards for Dream Preserved include Air New Zealand Screen Awards 2007 (Best Digital Feature), Overseas Koreans Independent Contest 2007 (Winner) and DigiSPAA 2007 (Runner-up).

Stephen was selected for and attended the Berlinale Talent Campus as part of the Berlin International Film Festival in 2007. He is in development on a new feature film Summer Rhapsody and Blind City with New Zealand Film Commission financing.

Producers

Leanne Saunders

Leanne started her career in the UK as a runner and production assistant at Working Title Films working on films Map of the Human Heart and London Kills Me, and as a junior assistant at Manifesto Film Sales. On return to New Zealand she established herself as a commercials producer for Black Stump Films and Sydney Film Company. She has produced/exec produced many award-winning shorts including the Golden Palm nominated Nature's Way at the 2006 Festival de Cannes. Feature film credits include Christmas 2003 (Edinburgh, Toronto, Melbourne, Karlovy Vary), Dick: The Devil Dared Me To 2007 (SXSW, Frightfest, Dead Channels, Fantasia), A Song Of Good 2008 (Rotterdam, Philadelphia, Warsaw, Durban) and Desert 2010 (World Premiere - Pusan).

Matt Noonan

Matt has been working in Film and Television since he was 16. Matt's experience as a producer extends from film and TV commercials to television, video clips, documentaries, short films and digital film.

In 1999 Matt started Curious Film, in partnership with director and cinematographer Darryl Ward. Aged 30, Matt found himself running one of Australasia's most promising production shops, producing music promos for some of New Zealand's best-known musicians and TV commercials for the region's top advertising agencies.

Director Of Photography

Marc Swadel

Marc is best known as a director of Photography specializing in Live Music and Music Videos with credits on the Warp Films documentary All Of Tomorrow Parties. He has worked as promo producer and editor for agencies including MTV, Playboy TV UK, Publicis Mojo and Mother UK. He is a freelance director for Wallpaper website.

Editor

Simon Price

Simon is a freelance editor working under the company Homebake Films. He is a graduate of the Victoria College of The Arts Film School, Melbourne specializing in documentary production and has a Masters in Scriptwriting from Victoria University. He was a Second Assistant Editor on King Kong, and then edited Luke Hawker Blackspot which won Grand Prize in Editing at the Rhode Island Film Festivals. His further credits include a documentary on the chart topping phenomena, Flight of The Conchords.

Sound Designer

Dick Reade

Dick has over thirty years experience in the film and television industry and his credits include Vincent Ward's Rain Of The Children and The Navigator: A Mediaeval Odyssey as well as When Love Comes. He has won awards for Best Sound Design in Film at The New Zealand Film Awards and Lifetime Achievement Award at the Screen Producers Conference in 2008.



Credit

Jenny
Joon
James
Video Store Boss
Creditor
Little Girl
Megan
Computer Geek
Video Workers

Deacon
Deacon's husband
Older Guy
Celebrant
Registry Witnesses

Bride
Groom
Workmates

Waiter
Salon Owner

Jane Kim
Andrew Han
Marek Sumich
Jung Joon Hwang
Jae ho Park
Monika Sumner
Hannah Jones
Min Kim
Hyo Jeong (Genna) Nam
Seo Yeon (Esther) Kim
Anthony Kang
Cho Hyun Lee
Dong Jin Kang
Geoff Houtman
Vicky Yiannoutsos
Jeun Lee
Soonok Kim
Aimee (Wong) Lee
Keum Woo Kang
Barney Duncan
Emir Hodzic
Richard Shaw
Jeong Hun Kim
Jo Kyoung Ae

Food outlet owner
Guy In Corridor
Bible Class Kids

Conductor
Pianist
Choir

Duck Joo Yoon
Stewart Knapman
Julie Kim
Eunie Choi
Da Eun Kim
Ye Eun (Grace) Won
Jae Eun Ann
Colleen Song
Julia Jung
Eui Jin Kim
Joo Seong Park
Susie Yoon
Derek Kang
Ryan Kang
Cho Hyun Lee
Kyoung Wha Shin
Nulee Han
Byoung Sook Lim
Kyung Im Hwang
Hye Suk Chung
Tae Han Lee
Seon Hwa Kim
Kyoung Wha Shin
HwirYul Kim

Credit

	Young Kim				Ruby Lee
	Lee Ji Jeong				Roger Tan
	Dong Soul Lee				
	Jee Hye Kim		Sound Recordist		Romina Vaterl
	Jong Hoo Lee		Producers Assistant		Jeong Seol
	Mi Sook Shin		Assistant Camera		Ciaran Riddell
	Sunny Min		On Set Stills Photographer		Eundo Jang
	Hoo Im Park		Poster Stills Photographer		Greta Anderson
	Byoung Sook Lim		Digital Assets Manager		Alec Steel
Karaoke Bar Owner	Sang Hoon Han		Graphic Design		Richard Shaw
Office Receptionist	Jessica Tchernegovski		Chief Financial Officer		Sarah Noonan
Hospital Receptionist	Rima Crawford		Production Accountant		Vivienne Earnshaw
Hospital patrons	Jay Vaidya		Wardrobe Consultant		Kirsty Cameron
	Ari Madrid		Performance Consultants		Stuart Turner
	Jason Smith				Sima Urale
	Colin Monto		Unit Manager		Russell Mace
	Xanie Crawford		Production Secretary		Chelsea Francis
	Sangster Crawford		Production Assistants		Hannah Jones
	Gordon Hudson				Isobel Dryburgh
Passers by	Qian Zhang		Safety Consultants		Scene Safe
	Effy Hou		Safety Co-ordinator		Robert 'Gibbo' Gibson
Restaurant patron	Fen Lee		Diver		Mitchell Johnson
	Leon Shu		Stunt Co-ordinator		Ike Hamon
	Lii Su		Translator		Genna Nam

Credit

Legal	Dominion Law
Insurance	Crombie Lockwood
Post Production Facilities Mgr	Luke Haigh
Flame Artists	Melissa Goddard
	Nigel Mortimer
	Ian Quigley
Flame Assistant	Nick Mulder
Tracklay and Soundmix	Dick Reade
Post Sound Facilities	Outback Studios
Picture Post Facilities	Curious Film
Camera Rental Suppliers	Swad Aiga
	Seed Cine Hire Limited

Original Music by Timmy Schumacher and Jae Kim

“Here Comes The Bridegroom”

Traditional

Performed by the Calvary Church Choir

Thanks to:

My Parents and Family

Darryl Ward

Peter Grasse

Michael Wrenn

Josh Frizzell
Young Soon Ko
Dave Roper
Aha Hair Design
Catch Casting
Scene Safe
Seed Cine Hire Limited
Vanessa and Alistair Riddell
Mike and Penelope Feeney
Johnson and Associates
Sean Tracey Brown
Jo Cleland
Kristen Rowe
Fresh Talent
Matrex Global Limited
Media Plaza
Hanarum Grocery and Mart
Bon ga ne Restaurant
Sky Bar and Restaurant
Koreaunts
Kirsty Donoghue, North Shore City Council
Katie Flannigan and Daniel Simons, Auckland City Council
Waitakere Hospital Health West

Credit

Severe Features

Curious Film

Independent Filmmakers Fund Creative New Zealand

New Zealand Film Commission

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