

To Show the World of Emotional Dystopia - A Short Film Analysis

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Abstract: The short narrative film *Bad Mirror* was completed during a film-making workshop in Graduate School of Advanced Imaging Science, Multimedia and Film, Chung-Ang University. Also, it was supported by Korean Film Council for independent film production. This article intends to discuss the narrative and its background. Furthermore, it explains the process in the making of the film as well as its result.

Keywords: Bad Mirror, Directing, Emotional Dystopia, Independent Film Production, Korean Film Council, Short Film, Uncanny

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1. Introduction

Bad Mirror is a short narrative film which was completed during a film-making workshop in Graduate School of Advanced Imaging Science, Multimedia and Film, Chung-Ang University. Even though it was a student's project, the production process was met with many difficulties just like other professional projects. It was supported by Korean Film Council for independent film production and was completed after about a year of development. Also, it took about 12 million won and a crew of 80 to finally complete the film.

I would even describe the experience torturous but it was taught me valuable lessons. The process and result of production will be discussed in this article. However, information regarding the narrative and its background will be introduced beforehand. I hope this article can help many other starting out filmmakers like myself.

2. Logline

A student has gone missing while an unidentified corpse is found in the same classroom.

3. Synopsis

'JE Yi' has been out of contact with his relatives since he ran away from home. 'LEE Taemin', who is his only friend files a missing report with the police after he finds a note written by Yi. In the meantime, an unrecognizable corpse is found hanging below the fan in the classroom when a short winter break is over. The identity of the corpse is speculated to be Yi. Furthermore, to add to the suspicion the spot was Yi's right before the break began.

Class representative 'KIM Hannah' testifies that Yi was a loner hence deepening the investigation by the detectives. While Taemin feels guilty and Hannah acts indifferent, the first and only witness 'LEE Yi Yung' begins to behave like he has never done before.

4. Director's Statement

There was a strange rumor circulating among the classmates after a summer break is over, when I was a middle school student. The story was about a student and a corpse. A student of nearby school has disappeared when the summer break was started, and a corpse appeared in a classroom when a new semester was started. The corpse hung below the fan in the classroom that the student has studied.

Naturally, this stirred a lot of discussion among people. Interestingly, most people had numerous questions only about the dead. They were curious for the reason that the student ran away and committed suicide. Also, they talked about whether the suicide was premeditated one or not, and the privacy of the dead student's friends, parents, and grades in class. Even some people insisted on it was a murder, not a suicide.

Whether all the disputed rumors were true or not, someone faced a corpse in an unexpected moment and place. That would be a trauma, so daily life of the witness after that day was ruined. In that light, the classroom became a dystopia, an emotional dystopia to be more precise. I thought it is also important that we remind the dead person or death itself. Also, I believe that it had to be shared. Therefore, I started to write this film.

5. Production Process

A. Preproduction

It is worthwhile to note the collapse between the images of classroom and corpse. As the saying goes, a situation that uncommon occurring in a common place truly make us strangers. That experience, even if it is an indirect one, opens a crack to anyone related. Showing that uncanny atmosphere without spoon-feeding the audience was my purpose in making this film.

In making this film, there were three rules that applied to crew members. First of all, actors must preserve an expressionless face and suppress emotion at any time. This is because defining and expressing feelings turns the actor's face or gesture superficial and artificial.

The second rule was retaining distance between camera and character. It was for maintaining objectivity as a creator and making audiences to neutral observers. Finally, director gave emphasis to minimize the division of shot by cut. I also considered characters' or objects' moving and blocking so that the editing could work. I thought that having close-up shots administered the audience passive. I frequently discussed about this issue with my director of photography.

I had to talk and meet with the crew members as much as possible. However, meetings and rehearsals were not enough to prepare the production perfectly, so the crew had some difficulties during the shooting. Even though I, the director, and crew members accomplished their given task, they had to always remember the significance of preparation in advance.

B. Production

There were some problems with controlling many characters. To make the matter worse, it became difficult to work with the assistant director who presented some issues while we were at the locations. We were constantly behind schedule.

Consequently, I had to modify the shooting schedule. I also had to rely on others' opinions and support. Also I decided to recruit more people as production assistants in the location who could react quickly to rapidly changing situations. The crew became better organized and efficient as the production went on.

C. Postproduction

The most important process in postproduction was the editing. I had to change the order of scene or sequence by the flow of the overall story. After the first edit was finished, basic color factors like exposure and white balance had to be corrected. It was made to seem desaturated. Finally, postproduction ended when sound design was completed.

6. Distribution and Reception

Final postproduction was just finished, so distribution is still in progress. I will try my best that the <Bad Mirror>

can be introduced in prestigious international film festival of all around the world from now on.

7. Conclusion

I always wanted to express something while the incident took place in my middle school class which was rife with rumors about a student and corpse. 'Some people who still alive' was the word. Eventually, I believe I adequately delivered expressed that feeling through my film. I believe these past years have been a great time to show the world of emotional dystopia, not just for the filmmaking.

Appendix

Main stills for <Bad Mirror>



Fig. 1. Yi Yung and Taemin meeting



Fig. 2. Taemin is staring at Yi Yung



Fig. 3. Yi Yung, last scene of the film

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Biography



Suin Kim majored in Literary Creative Writing at Art College of Dankook University. Now she is in MFA process and a teaching assistant at Graduate School of Advanced Imaging Science, Multimedia and Film, Chung-Ang University. Two short narrative films <Canvas> and <Bad Mirror>, a short documentary film <Flow Slowly> is her recent work.