



90MIN | KOREAN | 1.85:1 | COLOR | 5.1 SOUND

ALONERS PRESSKIT

KOREAN FILM COUNCIL PRESENTS
A KAFA(KOREAN ACADEMY OF FILM ARTS) PRODUCTION PRODUCTION SUPPORT KAFA FUND
GONG SEUNG-YEON, JUNG DA-EUN, SEO HYUN-WOO, PARK JEONG-HAK, KIM HANNAH, KIM MO-BEOM
PRODUCER LEE SEUNG-WON CINEMATOGRAPHER CHOI YOUNG-KI
WRITTEN&DIRECTED BY HONG SUNG-EUN
INTERNATIONAL SALES M-LINE DISTRIBUTION

BILLING BLOCK

KOREAN FILM COUNCIL **PRESENTS**
A KAFA (KOREAN ACADEMY OF FILM ARTS) **PRODUCTION**
PRODUCTION SUPPORT KAFA FUND
GONG SEUNG-YEON, JUNG DA-EUN, SEO HYUN-WOO,
PARK JEONG-HAK, KIM HANNAH, KIM MO-BEOM
PRODUCER LEE SEUNG-WON
CINEMATOGRAPHER CHOI YOUNG-KI
EDITING HONG SUNG-EUN **MUSIC** LIM MIN-JU
RECORDING PARK SONG-YEOL
SOUND DOLUCK **COSTUMES** IM SONG-JOO
MAKE-UP KIM SO-HEE
WRITTEN&DIRECTED BY HONG SUNG-EUN
INTERNATIONAL SALES M-LINE DISTRIBUTION

HOW WAS YOUR DAY?

SYNOPSIS

Living alone is fine, but being alone is hard.

Jina is the best employee at a credit card company call center.

She avoids building close relationships, choosing instead to live and work alone.

Jina maintains her solitary lifestyle well until her irritating neighbor, who would attempt to strike up conversations with her, is discovered dead a few days after his lonely death.

From that moment, tons of relationships she decided to ignore suddenly start to bug her: her father hounding her over her mother's inheritance, Sujin, a new recruit, who is bothersome but likeable, and nonchalant Seonghun, her new neighbor.



JUNG Da-eun / Sujin

A 20-year-old newbie at the call center who has just moved to Seoul from Chuncheon. She wants to do a good job and be liked, but finds that this proves difficult.



SEO Hyun-woo / Seonghun

An office worker. He moves into the apartment that Jina's neighbor died in.



PARK Jeong-hak / Jina's father

Jina's father, who abandoned his family long ago and returned to his wife two years earlier. Continually bothers Jina with incessant calls.



GONG Seung-yeon / Jina

The number one employee at a call center for a credit card company. She wants to live by herself and avoid any close relationships.



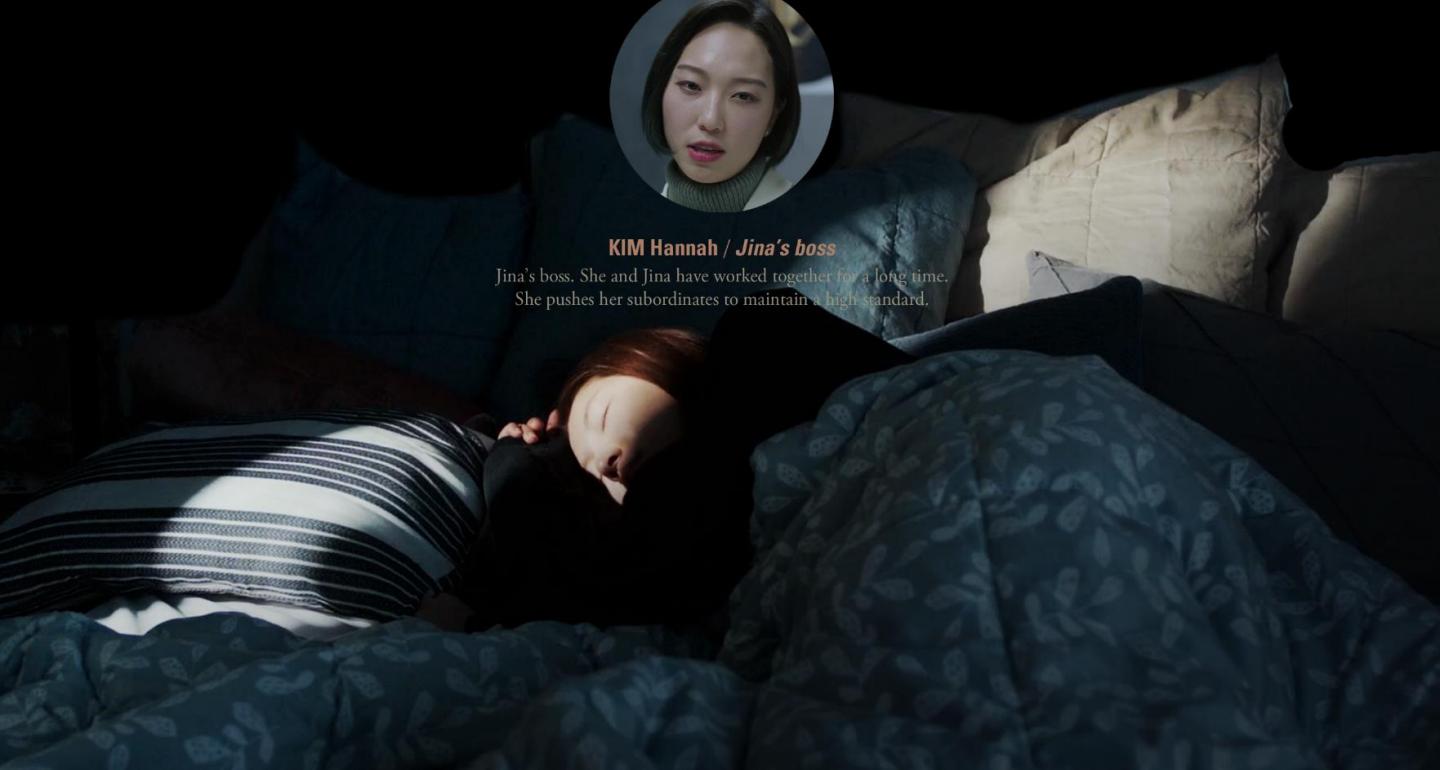
KIM Mo-beom / The guy next door

A guy who often smokes in the apartment hallway. His body is found a few days after he dies alone in his home.



KIM Hannah / Jina's boss

Jina's boss. She and Jina have worked together for a long time. She pushes her subordinates to maintain a high standard.





ABOUT MOVIE

The Warmest Thought-Provoking Drama of 2021

A moving portrayal of diverse one-person households

The definitive film on solo living

The number of one-person households in Korea has grown significantly over the past decade. This has led to the creation of neologisms such as holojok or honjok, both of which refer to people who prefer to be left on their own. The topic of solo living has emerged as an important topic in Korean dramas, variety shows, webtoons, and other forms of cultural content. *Aloners* is the first film to focus on this phenomenon, making it the warmest and most thought-provoking drama of 2021.

Aloners explores the worlds of ordinary people faced with the solitude of solo dwelling. As of 2021, two out of every five Korean households are single-person. Due to its subtle yet warm portrayal of intergenerational people living on their own, the film resonates powerfully with audiences. The main character, Jina, is a woman in her late 20s, her colleague Sujin just turned twenty, her two neighbors are men in their 20s and 30s, and her father is in his 60s. By pointing the camera towards people of various ages all living alone, the film offers an intimate glimpse into the inner workings of an increasingly fragmented society.

Jina—an antisocial woman in her late 20s working at a Call Center—leads a repetitive and monotonous life, spending most of her time glued to her phone or the television. She is a loner who has not only chosen seclusion but shows no interest in interacting with those around her. Sujin, on the other hand, is on her own out of necessity having recently relocated to an unfamiliar city and is adjusting to a new job. Sujin tries to befriend her older colleague Jina, but things do not work out the way she hopes. Additionally, Jina's next-door neighbor keeps trying to strike up a conversation with her whenever she passes him by in the hallway. Unbeknownst to her, this irritating neighbor is another lonely soul simply trying to connect with her. The neighbor's death is a somber reminder that more and more young people are living and dying alone. After his passing, Seonghun moves into the vacant apartment. A typical 30-year-old, he does his best to combat social isolation by being a good-hearted neighbor and organizing a memorial service for the previous tenant. His outlook on life inspires those around him as he demonstrates what it means to be a mature adult by doing his best to live a healthy and normal life through his bond with those around him. Finally, Jina's father is a recent widower in his 60s. Although he abandoned his family in his youth, he returned to care for his wife and remained by her side until she passed away. After mourning her death, he works to make the most out of his elderly life by actively engaging with those closest to him.

By examining these interconnected lives, *Aloners* tells an intimate story the ways in which society is growing increasingly fragmented. Nevertheless, the film's message is far from cynical. By humanizing its central characters, it asks the audience the important question: "What life would you choose?" It reminds the audience that regardless of the times we live in or how old we may be, all of us, in some way, are connected to the people and the things around us.

ABOUT MOVIE

When Talented Acting Meets Visionary Directing

GONG Seung-yeon & HONG Sung-eun win Best Actor and Distribution Support Award

At the 22nd Jeonju International Film Festival for their debut feature film, **<Aloners>**

<Aloners> was selected as a finalist for the Korean Competition section of the 22nd Jeonju International Film Festival (JIFF). GONG Seung-yeon went on to win Best Actor and Director HONG Sung-eun was awarded the CGV Arthouse Award Distribution Support Prize for their roles in producing a film that appeals to both critics and general audience members alike.

GONG Seung-yeon was unanimously selected for the Best Actor award by the panel of judges for the Korean Competition section. The panel praised her, stating that "GONG Seung-yeon anchored the film with her stellar performance in her first lead role in a feature-length film." GONG, who played the lead character Jina in *Aloners*, had this to say regarding her on-set experience: "I was nervous about whether I could carry the film from start to the end, as it was my first feature film. However, meeting with Director HONG gave me the resolve I needed. There were many scenes I had to shoot on my own, and I had to deal with the pressure of not having anyone to consult, but thanks to this experience, I have grown to trust myself. This film made me realize that this is something I am capable of after all." Her hard work on her first feature film proved to be fruitful as GONG was presented with the JIFF award for Best Actor. Equally exciting was the fact that despite this being Director HONG Sung-eun's first feature film, she won the CGV Arthouse Award Distribution Support Prize—an award given to foster new talents in Korea's independent film industry.



ABOUT MOVIE

An Unaffected Story Painted in Three Colors

GONG Seung-yeon, JUNG Da-eun, and SEO Hyun-woo

Bring their distinct acting flair to the silver screen

Actors GONG Seung-yeon, JUNG Da-eun, and SEO Hyun-woo shine in *Aloners*. GONG plays the lead character Jina with subtle emotional restraint, JUNG's character, Sujin, is delightfully expressive, and SEO's portrayal of Seonghun brings a calming presence to the film. These three colorful actors come together to seamlessly paint an earnest story about living alone.

Director HONG Sung-eun states that she firmly believed that this story would not work unless audience members empathized with the characters, and because of this, significant time and effort was spent on casting. The main character, Jina, had to be played by an actor who could put on a blank face but remain likable. After extensive searching, she chose GONG Seung-yeon. What made her stand out was her steady voice—an important factor because the character works at a Call Center. It was a clear decision. In multiple interviews, Director HONG repeatedly mentioned, "Of all the decisions I made while shooting this film, casting GONG Seung-yeon was probably the best one."

Finding the right actor to play the role of Sujin took even more time. Casting an actor with an innocent-looking face who could play an adult role was no easy task. JUNG Dae-eun, who was 19 years old at the time, was hoping to play an adult character, and during their first meeting Director HONG saw that the actor completely understood the character despite her youth and, rumor has it, offered her the role on the spot. After shooting the film the director stated, "Even now, I can't think of anyone who could have pulled that off better than JUNG Da-eun."

The character Seonghun was created in the director's image of an ideal person. Actor SEO Hyun-woo was the first name on her wish list, and he played the role of a well-balanced, warm, and mature character to perfection. Moreover, when SEO was offered the part, one of his legs was in a cast, yet the director was so taken by him that she changed the character's back story by adding a leg injury. Although Seonghun only appears in a few scenes, his character plays a key role in *Aloners* as someone who audiences can connect to and empathize with.

CHARACTER & CAST

GONG Seung-yeon as Jina

"I prefer being alone"

Jina has lived alone ever since she left home. Being around other people puts her on edge: the father who abandoned her and now wants to pretend they are a happy family, the guy next door who keeps trying to talk to her, and Sujin, the new girl at work. Until, one day, she learns that the chatty neighbor died alone at his home. She keeps thinking about the last thing he said to her, "A hello would be nice." Little by little, these words disrupt the calm of her daily life. Sujin, whose training she oversees, stops coming to work. Additionally, the man who moved in next door continues to get on her nerves. Jina just can't seem to shake the vague feeling of unease that has wormed its way into her life.

"Ten years of hard work pays off in first performance in a feature film"

Born in 1993, GONG Seung-yeon debuted ten years ago in 2012 as part of the cast of *I Love Lee Tae-ri*. She built a name for herself through roles in SBS's 2015 dramas *Heard It Through the Grapevines* and *Six Flying Dragons*. The same year, she further solidified her position in the industry after winning the SBS Drama Awards' New Star Award. Her stardom rose further after appearing in *We Got Married* and she has since appeared in various TV variety shows. In 2016 she took on her first lead role in the KBS drama *The Master of Revenge* and has since gone on to show off her acting chops in a variety of roles in dramas including tvN's *Circle: Two Worlds Connected* (2017), KBS's *Are You Human* (2018) and JTBS's *Flower Crew: Joseon Marriage Agency* (2019). In 2018 she paired with actor BYUN Yo-han to star in the short film *My Dream Class*. *Aloners* is the actor's first performance in a feature film, for which she won Best Actor at the 22nd Jeonju International Film.



CHARACTER & CAST

JUNG Da-eun as Sujin

"Can I join you for lunch?"

Having recently moved to the city, Sujin is adjusting to her first job at the Credit Card Call Center. Jina, who is supposed to be training her, continues to give her the cold shoulder, unwilling to even have lunch with her. For three days straight, Sujin brings Jina coffee and even offers her a can of the propolis spray her father bought her as a gift, but she refuses to accept them. Still, Jina is the only person she can lean on, so Sujin does her best to maintain a connection, although she can tell Jina finds her to be irritating. What choice does she have? She has friends and family back in Chuncheon, yet in Seoul she is on her own. Will she get used to living like this? Is it this difficult for everyone?

"From indie queen to rising star"

Born in 2001, JUNG Da-eun made her acting debut in the 2016 short film, Bus Stop. She is already a seasoned veteran who earned her stripes working on a wide range of projects, including both commercial and indie films as well as webdramas in both lead and supporting roles. She received favorable reviews in a number of local and international film festivals for her role in the short film Summer Night. Casual viewers will likely recognize her from Midnight Runners and Student A—two films in which she gives a short yet memorable performances. In the 2018 film Second Life, JUNG played the 18-year-old Sunhee, a girl who makes up lies to attract the attention of her friends. She did a phenomenal job portraying the complex emotions of the character and was nominated for Best New Actress at the 56th Grand Bell Awards. In 2020, she furthered her reputation by playing the role of Minji in the Webdrama Love Revolution, a nosy girl who is willing to do anything for her friends. In Aloners, she plays a young woman, Sujin. This is, moreover, the first time she has taken on an adult character, and the actor received high praise for her stellar performance.



CHARACTER & CAST

SEO Hyun-woo as Seonghun

"Do you make a habit of being angry all the time?"

Seonghun is in love with a woman with whom he hopes to start a family. He goes to see an apartment available for rent at a very low rate, but the woman next door insists that it is haunted. While he still gets the place, Seonghun feels sorry for the spirit who can't move on. Because of this, he considers hosting a memorial service for the former resident's soul. Additionally, the woman next door is always cross when they see each other. Will he be able to get along with her?

"An actor with many faces whose stock is skyrocketing!"

Born in 1983, SEO Hyun-woo made his debut in the 2010 musical, *The Harmonium in My Memory*. SEO has performed in a variety of plays, musicals, dramas, and films. He has built a robust filmography, playing diverse roles in a wide body of works including movies such as *Secret Zoo*, *Bring Me Home*, *Juror 8*, *1987: When the Day Comes*, and the hit TV drama *My Mister*. He became a household name through his performances in the movie *The Man Standing Next* and the TV drama *Flower of Evil*. In *The Man Standing Next*, he enthusiastically portrays the character of Doo-hyuk, going so far as to shave his head for the show. *Flower of Evil* was his first performance in a melodrama. In it he plays Mujin, a reporter chasing after breaking news. Not one to be type-cast, SEO's notoriety continues to rise as an actor with a wide range. In *Aloners*, he plays Seonghun, Jina's new next-door neighbor.



DIRECTOR

[Director/Screenplay] HONG Sung-eun



<Aloners> is a film that asks, "What does it mean to live well, alone?"

Born in 1988, Director HONG Sung-eun received a B.A. in Business Management and worked at a state-owned company, which she later left to study filmmaking full time at the Korean Academy of Film Arts (KAFA). She graduated from KAFA in 2018 as a directing major. She made her debut with the short film Good Father (2018). Aloners (2020) is the director's first feature film. She began working on the screenplay for Aloners in early 2019. Preproduction on the film began in September of that year once the scenario was completed. The film was shot in December over a period of fifteen days, followed by five months of editing. The entire process, including post-production, took a total of two years.

Aloners was invited to compete in the 22nd Jeonju International Film Festival's Korea Competition section and won the Best Actor Award and the CGV Arthouse Award Distribution Support Prize, gaining recognition for excellent acting and directing. The actors were able to put on solid performances because Director HONG, despite this being her first feature film, presented the cast with both a polished script and precise direction. The film has put the world on notice that HONG Sung-eun is one of Korea's most promising young directors. The director stated, "I wanted to create a film that inspires empathy by imitating our search for happiness on our own amidst the fight against loneliness." This film is an attempt to answer a question the director has long been pondering: "What does it mean to live well, alone?"



INTERVIEW W/DIRECTOR

Q What inspired you to make this movie?

"What does it mean to live well, alone?" was a question that I obsessed over throughout my 20s. Back then, I wasn't sure marriage was for me—I'm still not by the way—and I had no intention of living in a communal setting. I liked being on my own. It wasn't just about physical isolation. I lived alone because I didn't want anyone telling me what to do, and I didn't want to butt my nose in someone else's business either. I considered this to be the ultimate form of solo dwelling. Then, one day, I happened to watch a documentary about dying in solitude. I wasn't even deeply engaged with the film until suddenly a rush of uncontrollable tears began streaming down my face. In the moment, it was unclear to me what had triggered this emotional response. I mulled over it for several days until I realized I had a deep-seated fear I buried deep within me. I was lonely. I was alone because I didn't want my feelings hurt, and I didn't have the courage to look deep within myself and realize this was why I chose solitude. I had built up a wall inside my heart and believed I could flourish on my own.

It was only then that I started to notice how other people were dealing with this issue. I saw people on social media posting about how secure they felt eating alone, while others uploaded pictures of themselves travelling alone. But I wondered—if they had no qualms with being alone, why were they posting these things online? Why were they even using social media if they were, in fact, content with who they are? That is when I realized I wasn't the only one concerned with this issue. People were searching for ways to live a fulfilling life on their own because they didn't want to be hurt by relationships. However, this meant they had to fight against their feelings of loneliness. This is how the main character of the film, Jina, was created. She is a character who is, in many ways, built on who I used to be, and, to an extent, who I still am. For this reason, I also had her face the issue of solitary death, using the people around her to pose the question, "What does it mean to live well, alone?" I, too, lived through this confusion and asked myself the questions Jina faces in the film. I am still searching for answers, and through this film, I wanted to explore this question in a variety of ways.

Q What is the film about?

In short, *Aloners* is a story about saying goodbye. Jina is afraid she won't be able to cope if someone she has grown close to were to leave her. Saying goodbye is tough for everyone but it's especially hard for Jina because her father abandoned her when she was a child. She is so afraid of the prospect of losing someone that she avoids all forms of commitment. She firmly believes that she needs to be able to remain unshaken no matter who might exit her life. She sees people who are affected by such trivial things as being weak. But just because someone is no longer by your side doesn't mean that the relationship was meaningless. If that were true, life would be quite empty. The idea that the times and emotions shared between two people can lose all meaning overnight is, for me, more unbearable than the sting that comes from parting ways.

Jina has misconceptions about what it means to live a fulfilling life on one's own. She assumes it means a life free of goodbyes and believes the only way to prevent saying goodbye is to avoid relationships altogether. For this reason, she keeps pushing Sujin away. It is also why she doesn't talk to her next-door neighbor. I thought, perhaps the reason we tend to be harshest on the people around us is because we are afraid of having to eventually leave them. But all relationships eventually come to an end. The real tragedy is how cold we can be to the people by our side simply because we can't accept this fact. It seems to me that we often fail to muster the courage to fully embrace a relationship because of the uncertainty of the future. I thought it would be nice for Jina to learn how to be courageous in the face of separation through Seonghun.

INTERVIEW W/DIRECTOR

Seonghun is the type of person who will go out of his way to host a memorial service for someone he has never met. He feels connected to the former resident of the apartment. He believes it is his responsibility as someone connected to the former tenant to send his spirit off with respect. By watching Seonghun, Jina learns that saying goodbye doesn't void a relationship of meaning. In fact, it is a way of acknowledging that a connection still exists. In short, through this film, I wanted to highlight the importance of bidding a heartfelt goodbye to those people we are parting ways with. Being able to say goodbye is what allows us to open ourselves up to the possibility of new relationships. If we are not afraid of saying goodbye, we can afford to be more generous when forging relationships. For me, this film was a way to talk about the idea of how our bonds are based on connectivity.

Q How did you develop the characters?

Sujin and her boss, Hannah, were designed to show us who Jina was and who she will eventually become. Jina is stuck in the middle. The changes she underwent and could possibly undergo are dictated in large part by the customs and norms of the Call Center. Jina was probably once like Sujin. She was someone who wanted to be loved and wanted to be friends with the people around her; however, experiencing rejection changed her into the person she is now. If things had stayed the way they were, Sujin would have become as jaded as Jina, who, in turn, would have morphed into the likeness of Hannah. But Jina breaks this vicious cycle, and in so doing shows us there is still hope. Seonghun is the anti-Hannah. He is who Jina could turn out to be now that she has refused to become like Hannah. I don't have the answer to how we are supposed to establish relationships, but I wanted to show the audience what I consider to be the best path forward by introducing them to Seonghun. Of course, the decision Jina makes at the end of the film seems to be slightly different from the path chosen by Seonghun. Nonetheless, they are both appreciative of the ties that connect people. Seonghun is a model human being, the best kind of person I could imagine.

To be honest, since I never worked at a call center I had to rely heavily on documentaries and articles I found online. I was also surprised to learn that a lot of people I knew had experience working at call centers. Hearing what they had to say really helped. It seems that call centers are always looking for employees. They tend to attract college students for short stints during the summer and people who are in-between jobs. I also interviewed workers during preproduction and visited a call center thanks to arrangements made by the production team. I got to observe and interview the people there, which informed my narrative. For instance, the man who kept calling about his time machine and the woman who demanded that Jina and Sujin read her statements were based on real-life people I heard about during these interviews.

Q Could you tell us about the cast?

GONG Seung-yeon >> It was important that Jina be a character who audience members could empathize with. If she were drawn as a one-dimensional outcast, people would not be able to see themselves in her. This was why I was looking for someone that was attractive but could pull off a blank face. Several of my colleagues recommended GONG Seung-yeon. I hadn't watched a lot of TV dramas, so I didn't know her all that well. Initially, I was worried she looked too young and glamorous for the role. Once I met her, though, I could see that she was an actor with more layers than I had given her credit for. She had a steady voice, which made her a good fit for the character. She didn't have a lot of experience working on a film set, so casting her was a bit of a risk, but looking back, it was probably the best decision I made while making this film.

GONG Seung-yeon is a hard-working actor. She even followed Jina's daily routine to better understand the character. Despite her packed schedule, she still set aside generous amount of time for me whenever I wanted to talk to her about something. Being new to this myself, I am still learning how to accurately communicate my thoughts to actors, but Seung-yeon was very professional and accommodating. Her feedback was invaluable in developing this character. It was reassuring to have her in the lead role throughout the project.

INTERVIEW W/DIRECTOR

JUNG Da-eun >> A lot of thought and effort went into casting Sujin. It was no easy task finding an actor with an innocent-looking face who could play the role of an adult. We auditioned a lot of people, but the final decision was pushed back because we were hoping to find someone that looked just a bit younger than the actors who had auditioned for the spot. Then, the director of photography remembered JUNG Da-eun from working with her on a previous project. I had noticed her giving good performances in a number of short films, so when I heard him mention her name, I kicked myself for not thinking of her earlier. Luckily, she agreed to join the project, and she was perfect for the role of Sujin.

I was exceedingly impressed when I first met Da-eun. She understood the character thoroughly despite being so young. I wasn't anything like that when I was her age, so I was taken aback by how mature she was. Even on set, I was stunned by how she knew exactly when she needed to shine. I can't think of anyone who could have pulled that off better than she did.

SEO Hyun-woo >> Seonghun was created to match what I think is the ideal person. He is open to relationships, yet he is well-balanced in his own right. He is also mature and warm. We were hoping to find an actor with a level of warmth—someone who reminds you of the nice boy next door, yet who is also earnest and sincere. SEO Hyun-woo fit the bill to a tee. When we offered the part to him, we learned that he was nursing a leg injury he had suffered while shooting a scene in a TV drama. When I found out that he couldn't do any scenes while walking, I was disappointed. Then I thought, why not have him show up in crutches? It could be an injury he had sustained while playing a friendly game of football with the people from the neighborhood. I did feel a bit guilty, using the actor's injury for the story, but luckily Hyun-woo gave us the green light and we ended up working together.

Hyun-woo has extensive experience as an actor and is someone I really admire, so his presence alone was a great help. On set, even when I made some vague remarks, he somehow understood exactly what I meant and did a great job of realizing my vision in front of the camera. He was able to tune in to the wavelength I was on. I wanted the audience to feel at ease when they saw Seonghun on screen. And I can say without a shadow of doubt this is exactly what Hyun-woo was able to accomplish.

Q What did you focus on during production?

Jina lives a monotonous and repetitive life. Following her around means you end up in the same places over and over again, which meant we only shot at a few locations. How to engage with this repetitiveness was something I thought about considerably while directing. The conclusion I arrived at was that the film should only show the amount of space Jina is cognizant of. When Jina's world is withdrawn from the world around her, the camera zooms in on her. On the other hand, when someone or something unexpectedly breaches her sphere of awareness, the camera zooms out. When she is going through the motions the shots are monotonous, but when something unexpected happens, the camera work becomes much more dynamic. These are the things I focused on while directing. The sound design and mixing were carefully planned and conducted to follow this blueprint. Again, we based our decisions on how aware Jina is of her surroundings. For instance, the various sounds Jina focuses on were accentuated, while sounds she isn't paying attention to were toned down. This was meant to show how indifferent Jina is to the space she occupies. Just as much attention was paid to the space and sounds surrounding Jina as was lent to creating her character.

INTERVIEW W/DIRECTOR

Q What was your conceptual approach to the cinematography?

The director of photography was open to many of my ideas, and he did a superb job taking what was in my mind and realizing them as actual images. For example, I might make a vague comment about an idea I had, and the cinematographer would come up with ideas on how we should shoot the scenes. At the core was the idea of repetition and disruption. The repetitiveness of Jina's everyday life is mirrored by the repetitiveness of the camera work. When Jina's routine is disrupted, the perspective of the camera shifts as well. The first thing we had to establish was what should be considered part of Jina's routine and what needed to be counted as disruption in her everyday life. Conceptually, the shots of each space were designed to reflect Jina's awareness of her surroundings. Moreover, we based the camera work off of how perceptive she is of her environment. When Jina is shut up in her own world, for instance, when her eyes are glued to her phone, the cuts were tight. When her concentration is broken by external stimuli, we used a wider cut.

Another example are the scenes shot at the rice noodle shop, where we initially show Jina routinely eating alone. The scene is limited to two shots: an insert shot of a bowl of noodles and Jina's phone and a close-up bust shot of Jina. The camera does not show the surrounding space. We wanted it to appear as though Jina was all alone in this space because this is how she sees herself in relation to her surroundings. But when Sujin follows her to the restaurant, the camera switches to a full shot of the place. The bust shot of Jina eating while trying to ignore Sujin and the insert shot of the noodles might seem similar, but really these shots are larger. You can see the shoulders of the other customers sitting next to them. It is a sign that Jina's perfect, closed-off world is being disrupted by the external stimulus created by Sujin.

Also, even when the man in the hallway says something to Jina, the camera does not focus in on him. The only moment we can clearly see him is when they are standing next to each other. It is only when she consciously turns her eyes towards him that the camera brings him into focus. The one time we see him clearly is when he says, "A hello would be nice." In that moment, Jina finds him to be strange. These are just a few examples, but this is how we tried to shoot the film based on what Jina is thinking or feeling.

Q What was the most memorable scene?

The scene I wrestled with the most was the phone call between Jina and Sujin. It was the climax of the movie, and it required the actors to convey complex emotions. It was also difficult because we had to shoot the scene early on because that was when the locations were available. On top of that, the two actors had to perform in the dark, so we had some technical challenges as well. But once we started shooting, I was totally mesmerized by the performances of the two female actors. I still think about how, in that dark and quiet space, the entire staff was hushed and concentrated on the moment. All thirty of us had our eyes fixed on those two women. All of us knew we were shooting something special, and a quiet tension filled the room. It is remarkable how their acting resonated with the entire staff. I heaved a breath of relief after we finished shooting that scene.

INTERVIEW W/DIRECTOR

Q Could you talk about the ending scene?

Jina always takes the bus to and from work, and she usually watches videos during the ride. When she isn't watching a video, she is talking on the phone. For Jina, the space she occupies carries little meaning. Likewise, the bus is merely a means of getting from one place to another. She is always preoccupied with the world she sees through her phone, so she has never bothered to notice the texture of the air in the bus or the expressions on the faces of her fellow passengers. This is how she has been able to maintain the fidelity of her isolated world. For this reason, I wanted to show Jina expressing interest in the outside scenery as she sits in the liminal space of the bus in the last scene of the film. It is her becoming a person who is able to fully live in the present. She tears her eyes away from the screen of her phone, which she has been so preoccupied with, and begins to appreciate the world and the people around her. The camera, which has been purposefully placed in the bus this entire time, shoots this scene from the outside, which is something the director of photography thought would be critical. We wanted, in other words, to show Jina's bright and inquisitive face alongside the window's reflection of the things she is looking at. It is a metaphor of the moment when Jina's world has expanded to beyond her immediate self..

Q Could you talk about the in-door security camera?

Jina left her home and her mother the year she turned twenty. Actually, "fled" is a better word. Her father had abandoned the two of them, and she couldn't stand the fact that it seemed like her mother was sitting around waiting for him to return. Jina was still young when her father walked out on them, but no one bothered to help her heal from the hurt that she felt. I imagined Jina was just as angry at her mother for being so lethargic. This is why I had her leave home the moment she had the chance. The security camera she set up in her mother's house was meant to dull the sense of guilt she felt for leaving her mother. She checks in using the camera from time to time, but less frequently as time passes. She doesn't even bother turning it on after her father returns. She hates her mother for taking in and caring for her shameless father, who finally returns after all this time. She only remembers the camera's existence when she stops by the house to sign some papers renouncing her inheritance.

Q The meaning does "home" have to Jina?

To Jina, home is her own personal space which is totally cut off from the outside world. In a way, Jina is her house. She leaves the living room empty and keeps everything in her bedroom, and this shows you how limited her boundaries are. To me, the living room of a house is a representation of the owner's attitude towards the world. Jina has no intention of having guests over, so she feels no need to decorate the living room. She doesn't even want light shining into her bedroom, so she lives with the curtains closed. The television, which is always left on in her bedroom reflects how lonely she is. Jina is not someone who can stare into the darkness or bear the sound of silence. If she were to do so, she would be left with herself. She is afraid to see how alone she really is. However, ever since she learned that the man next door died alone, her home doesn't feel the same. Jina realizes how incomplete she is inside her isolated world. This is what sets the story into motion. The shift in Jina's relationship to her home is linked to the central theme of the film.

INTERVIEW W/DIRECTOR

Q Could you say a few words to the audience?

When I was growing up, we didn't have smart phones. In fact, we didn't even have personal computers or access to the internet. Now we can strike up a discussion with anyone using this technology. Because of the pandemic, now more than ever before, we are collectively rethinking what it means to communicate with people who are physically distant from us. I believe this will lead to more stories about how to live alone and how to connect with other people. This is a topic that I am still pondering on. I don't have the answers. Like it or not, though, I do sense that we are all in some way connected to one another. It is this feeling that convinces Seonghun to accept the fact that he is connected to the former tenant of the apartment, a man he has never met and who is now dead. Seeing the world this way makes what might appear to be a cold and uncaring world seem a bit warmer. I would like to thank everyone for showing interest in this little movie.

Q Let's talk about follow-up projects

I want to engage further with the topic of loneliness. I don't have anything concrete in mind, but I am thinking about an uncanny romance. If you look at fables and fairytales, there are lots of stories about non-humans who want to become human beings. I was wondering why they would want such a thing, and I concluded that maybe they are lonely. There probably aren't that many of "them," and to them, we humans look happy, or at the very least not lonely, because there are so many of us and we live together. I imagine that this is why they want to become human. But we are just as lonely as they are, yet they do not realize it. While it is endearing that they misunderstand us, it is a bit sad as well. I want to tell a story about one of them falling in love with a human, and I want it to be a happy ending.

