

At the End of Daybreak

HO Yuhang



Genre: Drama
Format: HD
Estimated Running Time: 95 min.

Budget:
US\$300,000 (HK\$2,340,000)

Funds Secured:
US\$50,000 (HK\$390,000)

Producer:
Lorna TEE

Writing Credit:
HO Yuhang (screenplay)

Production Company:
Paperheart Ltd.

Partners Attached:
Hubert Bals Fund
October Pictures Ltd., Hong Kong

HAF Goals:
Co-producers, Sales agents, Funds

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Introduction

After a young man's sexual relationship with an under-age teen whom he met on the internet is exposed, a storm of controversy is followed by murderous consequences. Malaysian filmmaker Ho Yuhang seeks to go beyond the surface of this type of incident, which happens in every city, and to explore the core of the problem, including failing filial values, a rigid education system and tabloid journalism. After the success of *Rain Dogs* (2006) at Venice, Toronto, Nantes, and other festivals, Ho will once again team up with producer Lorna Tee for *At the End of Daybreak*, a chilling social tragedy near the point of explosion.

Synopsis

Tuck Chai, a man in his 20s, meets Ying, a high school girl, through the internet. Their sexual relationship, however, is soon discovered by the under-aged girl's parents who threaten to press charges against the man. According to the law, sex with a minor constitutes rape. The man's mother negotiates with the girl's parents, however, and reaches a monetary settlement instead. Yet, after the mother has successfully raised the cash, the girl's parents still insist on suing him. The man, fearing an impending jail sentence, secretly asks the girl out to try to convince her. By this time, though, only fear, frustration, anger, hatred, and distrust exist between them. Matters begin to spiral down to a tragic denouement.

Director's Statement

The first image was the discovery of two female corpses. The TV reporters zoomed in on the tiger-face underwear worn by one of them. The police thought they were call girls who had ended up murdered by their clients. It was an all too convenient guess, which was quickly discounted. Three days later, police found clues that led to the arrest of a man in his 20s, and two other accomplices were brought in. Juicy sex and bloody headlines. Pure tabloid up-close-and-personal reportage. "The Young and Dangerous: Alarming Youth Crimes in Cold Blood," so they said. That was not all.

The young man's mother was rounded up as well. They photographed and handcuffed her. She had been instrumental in the crime that her son had committed. The reporters applied other buzz words: "overbearing parents hampering child's growth. How the young became too dangerous. Neatly packed psychological summation. Cause and effect and the straightest line to the solution." It made good headlines. They could not criticize enough the obvious social ills as a result of these: the failure of the education system, out-of-control media representation of sex and violence, corruption as an acceptable social norm, and everything else that is fast, cheap, and out of control.

I received no satisfactory answers. The reporting aimed to be complete, probing almost violently. Yet, it remained as inconclusive and elusive as the mother and son's blank faces on TV. So, I started asking questions, mostly of anthropological interests: the neighbourhood, the economic condition, the vocations, the schedules, the hobbies, the relationships, etc. By mapping out the linear trajectories of these people, I try to reconstruct the broken pieces and make them more or less complete again. I would like to know what it was like in the beginning. Nonetheless, the beginning presents endless possibilities and can only remain vague. The only sure thing is the end, because violence has a way of cutting short all possible communications. Presumptuously, I have presumed here to suggest how they came to be. Within the limited temporal experience of a film, I have realised that all of us will still be complete outsiders, no matter what happens. This film is an account of an inevitable loss that takes shape slowly, in which every character reasonably chooses a side and makes certain decisions that soon work against them in the worst possible way.

Director

Trained at Iowa State University and having worked as an engineer, Ho Yuhang decided to do something else – to write and shoot his own films. He started in the TV commercial industry to immerse himself in production. He later shot an award-winning documentary, *Semangat Insan: Masters of Tradition* (1999). In the last few years, Ho has risen from production assistant to assistant director and in mid-2003, he started to work as a freelance director. While working in the industry, he has always taken on alternative projects as well. He wrote and directed the telemovie *Min* (2003) for a local TV station as part of a series called *Odissi*. *Min* won the Special Jury Award at the Nantes Three Continents Festival and alerted the film industry to a bright new talent from Malaysia. His next feature, *Sanctuary* (2004), won a NETPAC Award and received honorary mention in the International Film Festival Rotterdam and Pusan International Film Festival. His latest film, *Rain Dogs* (2006) was selected at the Venice Film Festival, and Toronto International Film Festival and won him the Best Director Award at the Nantes Three Continents Festival.

Producer

Lorna Tee is from Malaysia and has worked extensively in theatre and film productions across Asia. Previously, she has been involved in diverse projects such as arts education, fundraising for non-governmental organisations, producing international literary events, producing award ceremonies, and public relations work. She also has worked as Marketing and Distribution Manager of Focus Films in Hong Kong. In addition to handling the two portfolios for the company and working on acquisitions and project development, she produces films for her own company, Paperheart Limited, in Kuala Lumpur. Her film credits include *The Beautiful Washing Machine* (2004), by James Lee; *The Shoe Fairy* (2005), by Robin Lee; *Crazy Stone* (2006), by Ning Hao; *Love Story* (2006), by Kelvin Tong and *Rain Dogs* (2006), by Ho Yuhang. Her present focus is on developing more international co-productions while fostering closer ties among Asian filmmakers.

Production Company

Paperheart Production Sdn Bhd is a new film company that strives to find the balance between independent and mainstream filmmakers and audiences. The company consists of filmmakers Ho Yuhang and Lorna Tee, two individuals who have won awards for their independent works while achieving success in commercial film industries in Malaysia, Hong Kong and the wider region. Last year the company produced *Rain Dogs*, one of the six films selected by Focus Films (Hong Kong) to be part of the regional film project, Focus: First Cuts. The film was successfully screened in the Horizons section of the 63rd Venice Film Festival. In 2007, Paperheart plans to produce *Matderihkolaperlih* by Nam Ron and *At the End of Daybreak* and *Trouble with Daylight* by Ho Yuhang plus the debut feature film *Strangers* by Charlotte Lim which was featured at the Talent Campus this year. In addition, Paperheart also has provided production support to Tsai Ming-Liang's new film, *I Don't Want To Sleep Alone*, which marked the homecoming for this Malaysian-born, Taiwan-based auteur.

Paperheart will also be developing and scouting for potential partners to co-produce projects locally and internationally.