

LI Ying



Genre: **Drama**
Format: **35mm**
Estimated Running Time: **100 min.**

Budget:
US\$1,200,000
(HK\$9,300,000)

Producers:
ZHANG Yunhui

Writing Credits:
LI Ying

Production Company:
Dragon Films
The Film Library

HAF Goals:
Funds, Co-producers,
Sales agents, Pre-sales

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INTRODUCTION

A relief station for homeless and delinquent kids, a Mother of Love, an unwanted boy abandoned at birth. Entangled between reality and lies, family and society, is another kind of 'love story'.

SYNOPSIS

Many businessmen, movie stars and religious groups have come to the relief station to participate in the "Mother of Love" campaign, which is supposed to be a new social welfare scheme to help provide homeless kids with some maternal love and the comfort a family provides. Fangfang is a family psychologist and a single mother who has come to volunteer at the relief station as a "Mother of Love."

But she is surprised to find out how mature these kids already are: even ten-year-olds already know about all sorts of crime, violence and sex. Their sense of right or wrong is simply survival and what is practical, and nobody is willing to go home. Memories of 'Maternal love' seems to only reflect family misfortunes of all sorts: poverty, ignorance, violence and apathy. Almost all the kids said their parents were either lost or killed themselves, or, they have no memory of their mothers at all.

Thirteen-year-old Huangniu was sent to the station because he was luring and abducting girls for a prostitution ring. He loves bragging about his tricks, all the money he supposedly made and his way with women. He's also infatuated with Fangfang. He made a bet with the other little rogues to see who can touch Fangfang's voluptuous bosom first. She tries to give Huangniu individual counseling, but that only stirs up a sexual reaction in him. One night, Huangniu manages to jump over the station wall with his mate Feiyu and he goes to a flashy nightclub where he finds the Big Boss, the man who bought him as a kid and taught him to steal and lure girls. The Big Boss tells Huangniu that he'll tell him who his mother was after he has repaid him enough by bringing him a virgin that night.

Huangniu drugs a sixteen-year-old girl at a train station with a "fantasy cigarette" but it turns out Feiyu is actually working for the police and the Big Boss and him are arrested. Huangniu is sent back to the relief station where he tells Fangfang that she has rekindled his dream of his mother and how he used to hide under his mother's clothes next to her belly: his memory of her is just darkness. He was sold because his parents could not afford to pay the fine for having more than one kid – he was the "surplus' child" and he just wanted to make enough money to find his mother. His adoptive father has told him that his mother has big breasts too, just like Fangfang.

Fangfang visits Big Boss at the police station. He says it is all just a con. He has never seen Huangniu's mother, but he does know the name of her village. Huangniu is shocked but says he still wants to go to where he was sold to take a look and see if his mother is still there. Fangfang takes Huangniu with her on the trip and it's the first time he's been around a woman for this long. They

arrive at Hong Village in Anhui Province and Fangfang is surprised to come across an organization of mothers who are seeking lost children. These are mothers who have come to regret having sold their children before and are trying to buy them back now.

On suddenly seeing the faces of so many mothers who have abandoned their own kids, Huangniu runs away. That night he tells Fangfang that he gave up hope for his mother long time ago and he just wanted an excuse to travel together and be close to her. He takes out one of his "fantasy cigarettes," and keeps puffing away as Fangfang passes out. He climbs on top of her, and slowly gets under her clothes. Fangfang looks like an expectant mother. Huangniu caresses the breasts of his "Mother of Love," and sobs inconsolably.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Relief stations – literally "stations to rescue and help" – have been set up in most major Chinese cities in recent years. They are used to accommodate, detain and temporarily manage the huge number of homeless and delinquent kids who have come from the countryside, and to help them find their way home. But for most of these kids going home is not a solution.

In the past 30 years, many peasant kids born outside the birth control quotas are simply "surplus kids" that were abandoned. Then with more than 230 million peasant workers in the cities, their children have also become an extra 'surplus' with no legal entitlements and education.

In this film, Huangniu's fate and his tragic confrontation with "maternal love" reflect the conflicts of a rapidly changing Chinese society, and the pain of its disintegration and the collapse of the family. Relief stations are like human theatres where dramas of truth and lies are constantly being staged. In this theatre, I am going to stage real dramas in which actors and homeless kids will interact and continue my exploration of the line between fiction and non-fiction. How are we to be really rescued and helped in this fragmenting society and changing world, when we cannot even tell the truth from the lies?

DIRECTOR

Born in Guangzhou, China in 1963, LI Ying started directing documentary films for China Central Television (CCTV) in 1984. In 1989, he went to Japan to study Japanese cinema under Oshima Nagasa and in 1993, he co-founded Dragon

Films to produce both TV and feature films. His first production *2H* was made in 1998 and went on to win the NETPAC Prize in Berlin. Since then he has worked on four more productions many of which integrate documentary and feature filmmaking techniques in both Japan and China and his unique vision has won him critical acclaim at many international film festivals around the world, including his documentary *Yasukuni*, his controversial 2007 film about the Japanese shrine which has now broken all box office records to become Japan's highest grossing documentary film ever.

PRODUCER

ZHANG Yunhui went to university in Japan in 1989 and founded Dragon Films with LI Ying in 1993. She has produced award-winning films and TV documentaries in both Japan and China, including all of LI Ying's productions such as *2H*, *Yasukuni* and films by other directors such as *The Square* by ZHANG Yuan, *At Home in the World* by WU Wenguang and *Fevered Angel*, a feature film, by MAITA Katuo. She has recently completed the very successful feature *Panda Full Life*, a co-production with Shochiku Films.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Dragon Films is a film and TV production company founded by producer ZHANG Yunhui and director LI Ying in Tokyo in 1993. Since then, Dragon Films has produced many award-winning productions in both Japan and China including *The Square* (1994), *At Home in the World* (1995), *Fevered Angels* (1999) and LI Ying's *2H* (1999), *Flying Flying* (2001), *Dream Cuisine* (2003), *Mona Lisa* (2006), *Yasukuni* (2007), and *Panda Full Life* (2008). Dragon Films has also produced many very successful TV documentaries for Japan's NHK.

The Film Library is an international sales and production company set up in 1996 in Australia and Los Angeles to handle independent productions from around the world. It has since distributed and produced many award-winning international productions from mainly Asian directors such as LI Yang (*Blind Shaft*, *Blind Mountain*), OKIURA Hiroyuki and OSHII Mamoru (*Jin-Roh*), WANG Quanan (*Jingzhe*), Ronny YU (*The Bride with White Hair*), ZHANG Yuan, Eric KHOO, YIM Ho, HUANG Jianxin, Joao Cesar MONTEIRO and many more. The Film Library represented a library of classic Chinese and Hong Kong films and also handles acquisitions for some foreign territories. The company has in recent years relocated its base to Hong Kong.