

REVIEW: 'Next Sohee' at Red Sea International Film Festival shines a light on workplace cruelty



JEDDAH: “Next Sohee,” South Korea’s competition title at the Red Sea International Film Festival, is a hard look at employee exploitation in the workplace.



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The film by July Jung examines South Korea’s shoddy treatment of its workers, especially apprentices, who are frequently cheated out of their wages.

This is the second feature from Jung, whose debut work, “A Girl at My Door,” premiered at the 2014 Cannes’ Un Certain Regard and went on to win several awards at other festivals.

“Next Sohee” was inspired by a real-life incident.

At 138 minutes, the movie may be a trifle long, but it explores a pressing issue with a lot of sensitivity.

The film follows Sohee (Kim Si-eun), a high school student, who is thrilled to land a job as an internet service provider in a big company. But a few days into the role, she is shocked when her supervisor commits suicide in her presence. Her new boss is a brutally rude woman, who never misses an opportunity to humiliate Sohee despite her excellent record.

Added to this toxic mix are abusive clients, who often take out their dissatisfaction with the firm on her. In another scene she sees her boyfriend being pushed around by his boss outside his workplace.

Sohee eventually runs away, but shock and hurt take a heavy toll, and she ends her life.

An investigation led by detective Yoo-jin (Doona Bae), who had a personal relationship with Sohee, enrages the boss and the company leaders, who would rather ignore the issue.

The film is a slow-burning expose of workplace ills and the causes behind them.

However, some may find the narrative overly dramatic and exaggerated. For instance, Sohee gets angry with her boss and pushes her to the ground. Is this possible? July is trying to make a point, but this appears a bit over the top.
