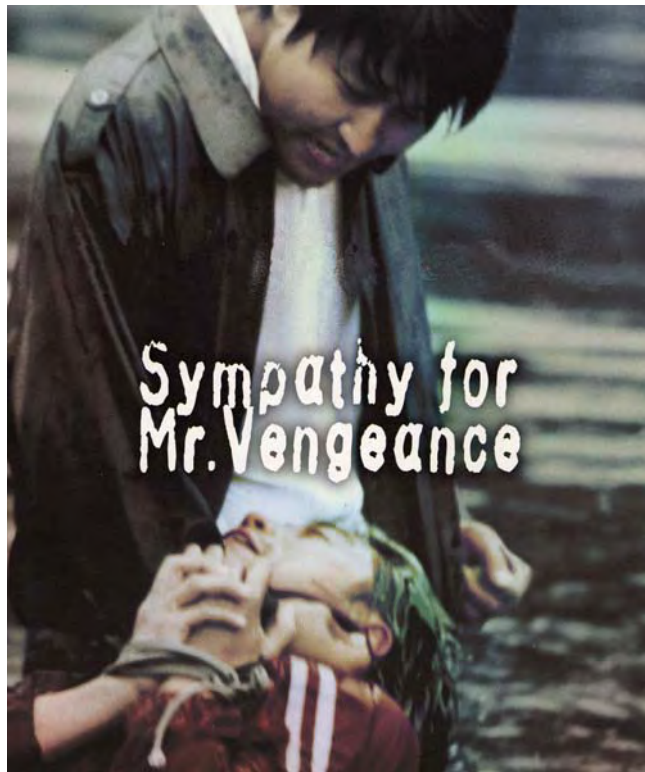


**TARTAN**  
**FILMS**

**PALISADES**  
PICTURES

**PRESENTS**



**Directed by PARK Chanwook**

**Best Film - Deauville Asian Film Festival**  
**Special Jury Award - Seattle International Film Festival**

Running Time: 121 min.

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## CREDITS

### CAST

SHIN, HA-KYUN	Ryu
SONG, KANG-HO	Dongjin
BAE, DOONA	Youngmi

### CREW

Executive Producer	SEOK, Dong-Jun; HAH, Sung-Keun; LIM, Jin-Kyu
Producer	LEE, Jae-Soon
Director	PARK, Chan-Wook
Script	LEE, Moo-Young, LEE, LEE, Jong-Yong, PARK,
Ridame	
Assistant director	LEE, So-Young; HAN, Jang-Hyuck
Photography	KIM, Byung-II
Lighting	PARK, Hyun-Won
Music	PAE, Hyun-Jin
Sound	KIM, Seok-Won
Recording	LEE, Seung-Chul
Art director	CHOI, Jung-Wha
Costume	SHIN, Seung-Hee
Props	JANG, Seok-Hoon
Editing	KIM, Sang-Beom
Set design	OH, Sang-Man
Makeup	SHIN, Jae-Ho, SONG, Jong-Hee
Special Effects	KIM, Jae-Min, KIM, Chang-Hee, KIM, June-Whan
	LEE, Jung-Soo
Line Producer	SOHN, Sae-Hoon

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

RYU (SHIN Ha-kyun), a young factory worker, has recently quit art school in order to look after his sister, who is dying a slow, agonizing death for want of a kidney. When a doctor tells Ryu that he is an unsuitable donor and that the chances of finding one is slim, Ryu turns to the black market. But the old lady who runs an underground organ ring cheats him, taking both his life savings and his kidney and leaving him without the kidney she promised in exchange. Ryu's girlfriend, a Raggedy-Ann leftist named YOUNGMIN (BAE Doona), urges Ryu to kidnap the four-year-old daughter of industrialist owner PARK DONG-JIN (SONG Kang-ho), who recently laid off Ryu and many other workers from his factory. Ryu agrees, but just as the plan is on the verge of success, Ryu's sister discovers what Ryu and Youngmin have been up to, and kills herself in despair. Compounding the tragedy, Ryu loses track of his little illicit charge during a visit to his childhood haunts, and she drowns in the river Ryu and his sister played in as kids. Dong-jin's deep grief quickly turns to rage and he embarks on an implacable quest for vengeance. At the same time, Ryu goes after the organ traders, knowing that if they had come through, none of the tragic occurrences would ever have happened. Bound by their common sense of loss and deep-seated anger, the two are on a collision course of revenge.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

“I’m a good person. I’m a hard worker.”

Those are the first words of a young factory worker, RYU (SHIN Ha-kyun) in Park Chan-wook’s *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*. But we don’t hear them from his mouth, for Ryu is deaf and dumb, and has had to write a letter to a radio program hosted by an agony aunt for them to be spoken. In a few moments we learn that his older sister had quit college to put Ryu through art school, but had fallen ill with gradual kidney failure. Ryu has quit school himself to care for her and to somehow find a kidney donor with the right blood type. But his efforts have been in vain. Not only are no donors on the horizon, but his employer, factory-owner PARK DONG-JIN (SONG Kang-ho), has laid off much of his workforce, including Ryu.

Life is getting desperate. Because Ryu is deaf, he isn’t disturbed by the noises of lovemaking and arguing that permeate the thin walls of the apartment he shares with his sister. But neither does he always hear his sister’s cries as the sick young woman tosses and turns in pain bordering on agony and who has to toss a whatever object is at hand at his back in order to get his attention.

Ryu communicates better with his girlfriend, YOUNGMIN (BAE Doona), another artsy type who belongs to a leftist group. Youngmin attended Ryu’s special school for the deaf when they were kids together (even though she could hear perfectly well) and speaks to him now in floppy sign language.

Ryu is so desperate that he responds to a handbill pasted to a men’s room wall that advertises organs for sale. Following directions he gets over the phone, he’s picked up by two tough-looking men who bring him to a half-built building. Inside, a woman in her sixties offers to trade him a new kidney for his sister for one of his own plus 10 million won. Ryu comes back later with the money – all he had in the world – and submits to an operation, only to wake up hours later, naked, abandoned, and missing a kidney.

“You idiot, you stupid [expletive],” Youngmin upbraids Ryu. “That money would have saved your sister!” And indeed it would have, for the same doctor who had told Ryu that finding a matching donor was unlikely, had suddenly come across with one. The fee for the operation: 10 million won.

Pushed into a corner, Ryu and Youngmin decide to kidnap the 4-year-old daughter of Ryu’s old boss. Youngmin says there are good kidnappings and bad kidnappings, a good one being an unreported one where the victim is returned unharmed to the family. The pair is so convinced that there’s will be a good kidnapping that they worry that the little girl will enjoy being holed up with them so much that she won’t look sad or frightened in the ransom photo. Their unlikely suspicions turn out to be right on the money, and Ryu has to play keep-away with a bead necklace he made for the girl in order to coax some tears out of her.

The plot seems to bear fruit when Dong-jin follows instructions not to call the police and brings the ransom to the appointed drop-off location.

Catastrophically, when Ryu's sister discovers that the little girl "visiting" is actually a kidnap victim, she's overcome with guilt and sorrow. She kills herself and, in his grief, Ryu takes the little girl back to a river by his hometown, where he and his sister used to play in shallow rock pools by the riverside. But while he's preoccupied with his sadness, Dong-jin's daughter drowns in the river.

Dong-jin is disconsolate when he hears the news and vows to take vengeance on those responsible for the death of his little girl. At the same time, Ryu, wracked with guilt, makes an equally firm vow to avenge his sister's death by attacking the organ black-marketeers who took his money and his kidney and never came up with the precious organ for his sister.

The two anguished men set out on intersecting paths to destruction, a fate that even their recognition of their similarities can't forestall.

## BACKGROUND

You might laugh now and then during **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**; there is something humorous, after all, about a young woman attracting a little kidnap victim by flopping around and singing an anti-Communist children's song. But Park Chan-Wook's film is stingy indeed when it comes to softening its diamond-sharp edge. For this is a hard-core, hardboiled crime drama, the first Korean movie to dare to be so. True, many Korean films had previously laid claim to the term "hardboiled," but even the most daring of them avoided ratcheting up the tension to red-line levels. To keep the audience at a safe distance from their harsher elements, they'd throw in a comic second-banana or even a softhearted romance. But according to Park, hardboiled movies are not about safety. They're about risky portraits of grim realities, about raw honesty. Tension isn't something to be relieved; it's to be embraced.

With **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**, Park produced more than a keen thriller. He also depicted the darker side of Korean life, the side of society that ignores the economic disparities that eat away at individuals' most precious intimacies.

Park made **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance** between his first effort, **Joint Security Area (JSA)** and his award-winning **Oldboy**, which set box-office records when they were released in Korea. **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**, which, as the title suggests, displays an almost paradoxical sympathy for its two murderous antagonists, forms a crucial link between the anti-militaristic humanism of the first film and the more bare-bones variety of the third.

Park had actually been working on the screenplay for **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance** before he made **Joint Security Area**, and no doubt the experience of the first movie, which has an almost mystery-like plot and generally likable characters, helped hone his skill for the second. For while **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance** presents the viewer with a reality represented by kidnapping, violence, and murder, it crucially required the audience to identify with its tortured characters. At the same time, **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance's** focus on intense experience pointed ahead to **Oldboy**.

Stars Kang-ho Song and Ha-kyun Shin, so important to the success of **Joint Security Area**, co-star again in **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**. Veteran stage actors, they still had little precedence for the requirements of Park's second film.

Firstly, they had to cast off firmly established screen personae. Kang-ho Song had to suppress his trademark sunny innocence for a character who at times appears cruelly heartless. Ha-kyun Shin, meanwhile, playing a mute character, had to rely on facial expression and physical gesture, only occasionally aided by his usual smile.

These two were joined by the relative newcomer Doona Bae. Acclaimed for her acting in **Barking Dogs Never Bite**, she morphed into a scruffy, offbeat femme fatale in **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**.

## DIRECTOR PROFILE: PARK, CHANWOOK

### PARK CHANWOOK

PARK Chanwook was born on August 23, 1963 and, as a young man, graduated from Sogang University with a degree in philosophy. A chance viewing of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* during university confirmed his desire to become a filmmaker. He first became a film critic and then a director's assistant. He made his directorial debut in 1992 with *Moon Is...Sun's Dream* and achieved widespread success in 2000 with *JSA: Joint Security Area*. His next film, *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*, was a critical success. With **OLDBOY**, PARK again collected critical kudos and was honored with the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2004. Since then, he has contributed the Korean segment of the Asian horror omnibus, *Three Monster* (co-directed with Takashi Miike and Fruit Chan).

### FILMOGRAPHY:

2004: Three, Monster  
2003: Old Boy  
2002: Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance  
2000: JSA: Joint Security Area  
1997: 3 Members  
1992: Moon Is...Sun's Dream

### **Director's statement**

"In hard-boiled fiction by Chandler, Hammet, Mcvaine, and Hemingway, there clearly exists a kind of realism. When a homicide cop commented, 'To me, summer is just a season when dead bodies rot faster; no more, no less,' he described a new genre that translates hard-boiled novels into films. When these films became comparatively less realistic for the sake of emphasizing the visual aspect, I was quite discontent. Putting on airs or adding cool finishing touches was just so not me.

"Regardless of whether people agree with me or not, I believe that **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance** contains a small amount of realism. It is, of course, the reality of one who considers the world a barren desert. A desert is originally a dry, cold place that is unfair, obscure, and totally unpredictable."

### **Awards**

2000 Best Director, Choonsa Film Festival  
2000 Best Director, Blue Dragon Awards  
2000 Best Director, Baeksang Arts Awards  
2001 Selected for competition, Berlin International Film Festival  
2001 Best Film, Deauville Asian Film Festival  
2001 Best Film, Grand Bell Film Awards  
2001 Special Jury Award, Seattle International Film Festival

## CAST PROFILES

### **Kang-ho Song (Dongjin)**

*I started with nothing. I believed that the world would give me as much as I gave to it. But my wife left me and my only daughter turned up dead. Now I know...you can't trust the world. The only one I can trust is myself. My hands...*

*Dongjin was a high school graduate who started off as an electrician and worked his way up to company president. He marries a beautiful woman and has a daughter, but his blissful family life is short-lived. After his divorce, his factory runs into trouble and his young daughter is kidnapped.*

Born in 1967, Kang-ho Song started his acting career on "Yunwoo Stage." His small role in **The Day a Pig Fell into a Well** introduced him to the movie world. He made his real debut in director Chang-dong Lee's **Green Fish**. His next role in **No. 3** was a huge hit, and his following appearances in **The Quiet Family**, **Shiri**, and **The Foul King** secured his success. He received great acclaim at the Berlin International Film Festival for his performance in **Joint Security Area** and is now acknowledged as one of Korea's leading actors.

### **Ha-kyun Shin (Ryu)**

*I am mute. I cannot speak or hear sounds. But I am not alone. I have my sister and my lovely girlfriend Youngmi. But my sister is dying. I wanted to live as a good man...but being a good person gets you nowhere.*

*Born deaf and dumb, Ryu had no friends and became an extreme introvert. He feels infinite gratitude and love for his sister, who devoted herself to taking care of him after losing their parents. He also loves his beautiful and confident Youngmi who gives him happiness for the first time in his life, but this happiness begins to fall apart when his sister becomes terminally ill.*

Ha-kyun Shin was born in 1974. While attending the Seoul Institute of Arts, he was chosen by Jin Jang to play the lead in his debut film **The Happenings**. He later appeared in **The Spy**, then gained tremendous popularity and confirmed his position as an outstanding actor with his role as a simple North Korean soldier in **Joint Security Area**. He studied sign language in preparation for his role as a mute in **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**.

### **Doona Bae (Youngmi)**

*Ryu is like a dove. He cannot fly away from the polluted city even as his wings are torn apart and his beak is crushed...I have to help him. Good and evil are both for the living.*

*Youngmi was born a normal child, but pretends to be dumb and enters a school for the deaf where she meets Ryu. She is a college dropout but is a fierce activist who takes her beliefs as far as to proceed to North Korea alone. She believes the world is not an equal place for everyone, and considers Ryu the biggest victim. She has a say in everything Ryu does.*



Born in 1979, Doona Bae made her modelling debut in a commercial and rose to stardom with her attractive looks and unique expressions. She is a new generation heroine who has strengthened her acting abilities with appearances in **The Ring Virus**, **Barking Dogs Never Bite**, and **Plum Blossom**. **Barking Dogs Never Bite** brought out her talent in the unique character of Hyun-nam. In **Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance**, she shatters all her previous screen images and goes up against the challenge of playing a femme fatale with an extreme personality.