


















A Masaaki Kudo Film

遠いところ





**Karlovy Vary**  
**International Film Festival**  
Crystal Globe Competition

World Premiere

# **A FAR SHORE**

a Masaaki Kudo film

Japan – 2022 – 128mn – 5.1ch - 1.66:1 – Japanese & Okinawan

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## INTRODUCTION

Facts in Okinawa (as of 2021)

According to research done by the Okinawa Prefectural Government, the rate of single parent mothers in Okinawa is double the national average and is said to be the worst nationwide.

Birth rates among the younger population of Okinawa have also been high, with the teen pregnancy and underage birthrate at an astonishing 2.6 times higher than the national average.

The unemployment rate in that prefecture is also the lowest nationwide.

Consultations regarding domestic violence in Okinawa have also recently been at a record high, with an average at double of the rest of the country.

This film is based on several true stories we heard during our research in Okinawa, but the script and the characters who appear are fictional.

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### SHORT SYNOPSIS

Aoi has dropped out from high school and gives birth to a baby son with Masaya. They are born and live in Okinawa, a Southern island of Japan. To make ends meet, she starts working as a night-club hostess as Masaya loses his job and cannot deal with the family's responsibilities. Their immaturity and dependence aggravate the relationship with continuous fights leading to a social downfall. Aoi's bond for her son sets her on a path to find solutions.

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### LONG SYNOPSIS

Aoi (17) lives with her husband (Masaya) and their son (Kengo, almost 2) in Okinawa City on the island of Okinawa. Aoi was raised by her grandmother after her parents left her and married Masaya at 16.

Tender toward Aoi before they wed, Masaya has become violent and no longer contributes his meagre earnings to the household. He often beats Aoi. At night, Aoi leaves Kengo with her grandmother and goes to work at a nightclub in the centre of town.

Aoi sometimes has bruises on her face from the abuse and when she does, she can't earn money as a hostess. The club stays open until dawn. Her classmate from junior high, Mio, also works there.

After hours, Aoi and Mio party with friends at a club owned by Tomomitsu, a big brother figure. The night's earnings are often spent maintaining bonds with friends and colleagues, making it hard to save money.

As these unsettled days of work and childrearing progress, Aoi tells Masaya they don't have enough money for rent, he explodes in a fit of violence. Aoi tries to protect herself, but she is no match for him and he beats her relentlessly.

Aoi is left with a broken nose, eyes swollen shut, and cuts to her mouth. Unable to work, Aoi borrows money, looks for a daytime job and tries to maintain her household, but she finds no path out of her harsh reality.

This is the story of her struggle in the chasm between dependence and self-reliance, as she searches for a way to move forward on her own.

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## CAST

Kotone HANASE (Aoi)

Yumemi ISHIDA (Mio)

Yoshiro SAKUMA (Masaya)

Tsuki HASEGAWA (Kengo)

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## CREW

Director & Writer: Masaaki KUDO

Executive Producer: Shunsuke KOGA

Producer: Yuki KITAGAWA

Associate Producer: Hisano NAKASONE

Casting director: Kazuyasu GOTO

Cinematographer: Takayuki SUGIMURA

Lighting Director: Naoki NOMURA

Production Designer: Ran KOBAYASHI

Sound Designer: KEEFAR, Hironori ITO

Original Score: Masamichi SHIGENO

Co-screen writer: Mami SUZUKI

Production companies: Allen, The Fool

Planning & Line producing: Allen

Line producing cooperation: The Fool

World Sales: Alpha Violet

Japanese distribution: Rabbit House

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### SUPPORTED BY

Okinawa Cultural Promotion Association

Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau

Okinawa City Tourist Products Promotion Association

Ryukyu Broadcasting Corporation

The Okinawa Times

The Ryukyu Shimpo





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### DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

Masaaki KUDO was born in 1983 in Kyoto, Japan.

He worked as assistant director on several Japanese well-known directors, such as Sion SONO, Yoshimitsu MORITA, Yojiro TAKITA, Isshin INUDO, Isao YUKISADA, Shinji HIGUCHI and gained wide experiences in diverse films from the classic period drama to sci-fi fantasy.

His first feature, « I'm Crazy » received Netpac Award at Bucheon International Fantastic FF in 2018. Then « Unprecedented » premiered at Tallinn Black Nights FF in 2021.

« A Far Shore », his third feature film, was developed for many years in cooperation with Okinawa.

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### DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In Okinawa, a collection of islands in southeastern Japan, poverty affecting single mothers, young mothers and their children has become a serious problem. We see many reports on the living conditions of poor girls in Okinawa that depict girls being exposed to the violence of their families and lovers, escaping the violence and finding their own place. What I was most interested in was the "viewpoint" of those reporting. They do not judge or try to influence the girls' conduct. They are just considerate of their feelings and listen to their problems. By working like this, we can clearly see the wishes and hearts of the girls who struggle between dependence and independence. I thought this could be the movie's theme.

Financial independence does not mean mental independence. When we think about poverty, we should talk about the mind rather than material poverty. We live in an era where it is enough to leave our parents and go out into society with just a smartphone. Independence for these girls presents a difficult problem of how to reveal their feelings and find their own place. When making this movie, we had to do fieldwork and search for a unique motif. If the actresses are playing real girls, they need to hear the voices of the girls who are living this life. I thought it was not good enough for the actors to play the characters in the script with their imagination. Therefore, we had to start by looking for girls that our staff and cast could talk to directly.

The heroine of the movie is exposed to violence by her family and lover. There is nobody around her to help. She has the desire to escape and find a place to live peacefully. When she escapes from the ruthless violence, she feels stronger, much lighter and freer to step on the ground than before. I made the last scene of the movie with this hope. This movie is dedicated to my mother and grandmother who raised me in an era of violence and intense discrimination against women.

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### PRODUCTION NOTE

The main character, a 17-year-old woman, is exposed to her husband's physical violence. There is no path of escape, no one to guide her. Unable to secure a safe haven for herself and her small child, she and her violent husband are also mutually dependent and unable to separate. Her immaturity, lack of resolution, and shallow grasp of reality reflect the lives of a certain segment of women in contemporary Japan.

The film was conceived around the time the director's mother was informed she was dying of cancer, which coincided with the publication of a number of documentary accounts of Okinawan child poverty, domestic violence and single motherhood, beginning around 2015. Three years were spent developing the story by interviewing young women facing these difficulties in Okinawa, consulting support organisations, and exploring the lives of young people in entertainment districts. The entire film was shot in Okinawa, with a focus on child poverty and the struggles of young women to achieve independence.

Our research suggested that economic independence is not the same as spiritual independence. Poverty should be addressed not solely as material scarcity, but as a matter of the heart. These young women have little understanding of how to live or manage money, so material support will not secure their independence. At a time when leaving home is a casual rite of passage and one can get around with just a cell phone, the challenge these young women face to find a place of their own and to achieve self-realisation is a difficult one indeed.

The aim of this film is to highlight the structural problems of Japan as a society where women and men of all ages face intense pressures. By depicting the life of one woman in Okinawa, we hope to stimulate discussion of the root causes of these problems.

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