



## “Serdadu Kumbang”

### OFLC Requirements

**Film Title** – “Serdadu Kumbang” (The Beetle Soldiers)

**Director's Names** – Ari Sihasale

**Producer's Name** – Ari Sihasale

**Duration** – 105 minutes

**Genre** – Drama

**Language** – Indonesian with English subtitles

#### Classifiable Elements:

Elements:	
Themes	Family hardships, loyalty, achieving one's dreams
Violence	Theft
Sex	None
Language	no coarse language
Drug Use	None
Nudity	None

This film does not exceed any of the classifiable elements corresponding to the G classification.

#### Detailed Synopsis

In 2010 many Indonesian students did not pass the national exam. Based on that experience, teachers from elementary and junior high school 08 are tightening up their curriculum and teaching methods.

Amek is one of the many students who failed last year's exam. His introverted, stubborn attitude and playfulness gets him in to trouble with his teachers. Conversely Minun his sister, in the secondary school is at the top of her class. She frequently wins maths competitions in her district and a row of trophies and certificates line their living room. Minun is an icon of school, family and community pride.

Minun and Amek live with her mother, Siti, in the village of Mantar on the island of Sumbawa. It is located at the top of a hill, away from urban areas. Siti's husband, Zachariah, has been working in Malaysia for three years and has never come home; not to mention he never sends them money.

Minun loves Amek very much. Not only did he not pass the exam last year, but Amek has a harelip and is often bullied by his friends. But God has blessed Amek with many talents, one of them, he's a very good jockey. Many people ask, What's your dream Amek? Amek never answers the question, even when the teacher asks him. Amek is afraid that people will laugh. He is very much aware of his handicap and it distances himself from his dreams.

Amek, Acan, Umbe, Minun and Mantar are very close to their teacher Imbok. She understands the desires of her students.

The Beetle Soldiers is based on the fable of a little boy who prayed to save his mother and became a ground beetle. It is a beautiful portrayal of a family enduring hardship but continuing to love one another, and of a boy who cultivates his dreams

- The film opens with a group of children sitting under a tree out in the open looking out across the ocean with the volcano Mt Rinjani on Lombok in the background. Two religious leaders, one of whom is Papin are talking with the children about the history of the local lands.
- All the students are lined up outside the classroom and their teacher is berating them for their lack of discipline. They are made to do laps in the schoolyard. It is obvious the teacher is spending more time lecturing the students about being good students, than teaching them.
- Ameks mother, Siti, arrives at the classroom and asks to see Amek for a moment. The teacher excuses Amek from class and they leave together. His mother has a letter from her husband (Ameks father) who works away. She asks Amek to read out loud to his mother saying that hi. The letter apologizes and says that he cannot come home and gives them the phone number of his friend if they need to contact him. He doesn't say when or if he will be home and doesn't send any money. It turns out the letter was written a year ago.
- Back in class the teacher is discussing aspirations and goals. All the children have noble dreams and aspirations. The teacher asks Amek what his dream is but he becomes quiet and sad and will not say as people will laugh at him.
- On the outskirts of the village is a tree located at the top of the hill overlooking the ocean. Villagers call it the Tree of Dreams. The tree is unique. Almost every branch is tied with a rope and at the tip of each branch are bottles. A piece of paper bearing the name of each person and their dreams is inside each coloured bottle. The classmates are sitting in the tree – reading each other's' aspirations and dreams. They cheer and clap as each other's' dreams are read out. All the children laugh at Amek and mock him for having no dreams or aspirations. Amek wants to be a jockey but does not want to let anyone know as he does not want to be bullied and laughed at.
- Amek is given a mobile phone by his adult friend, with which he tries to make contact with his father
- Amek installs a makeshift antenna in his mother's home in an attempt to get a signal to use the mobile phone to call his father. Although they are able to make a connection they are not able to make contact with Amek's father.
- Meanwhile, at school, things are not going well for Amek, as the children are disciplined by the teacher for not concentrating on their studies. The principal compels each student that they must pass their national exams as the school want 100% pass rate.
- When a prank is played on the teacher and all students are threatened with punishment, Amek takes the blame, although he didn't do it.
- Ameks, mother continues to urge Amek that he should be grateful that he has the opportunity to get an education and should not misbehave at school.
- Whilst walking their horses down the road Amek and his friends come across a man whose motor bike is broken down. Amek helps him by using his horse to tow him in to town.
- During a class exam several of the boys are found to be behaving inappropriately. The supervising teacher catches them, subsequently the principal punishes them, making the students undertake physical activity for long periods in the playground. Several of the teachers are upset by this as they see it as very unfair punishment and ask the principal to stop it. The principal will not agree and Lombok threatens to resign. The situation is taken to the local religious leader, Amek's grandfather to discuss. The school realises that the children are being treated like soldiers not children and that the school must be responsible for the education of the children's hearts and souls as well as their brains.
- The boys stop going to school but are visited by their favourite teacher who shares with them that whatever they want to be, whether it's a farmer or a fisherman they need an education. Amek says that he wants to go to school but he's tired of getting punished. The boys promise they will behave.

- Amek spends more and more time improving his riding skills. And Ibu Imbok, the teacher starts community language lessons for the parents in the village to encourage all parents to send their children to school to get a good education.
- Whilst the local villagers are at a community gathering Amek receives news that his father has returned home. He races out in the street, running up behind his father. They embrace emotionally in the street. Amek's father is greeted with open arms by the rest of the village and especially by his wife.
- Amek's father, Zakaria is treated like a hero upon his return, with many stories of his work and adventures in Malaysia, and showing off his expensive purchases from working in Malaysia.
- Imbok continues her classes with the parents and grandparents of the village and the students practice for their exams.
- Meanwhile, Papin has a meeting with the principal about Pak Alim, who Papin believes is not teaching the children and mistreating them. The meeting is interrupted by Alim, who informs the principal that none of his students have passed their class tests. The exams are fast approaching.
- As the family has run out of money, Zakaria starts trying to sell his expensive jewellery that he has purchased whilst in Malaysia.
- Zakaria is confronted at the house by the person to whom he sold the jewellery– it is found out that the expensive rolex watch is a fake. The men take Amek's much loved horse to make up for it. Amek is devastated. He is comforted by his best friends Acan and Umbe
- The day of the national exams arrives. Amek is last to leave the exam room. The next day the students go on excursion to learn about turtle conservation and release baby turtles into the ocean. Amek is watching a game in the village and his horse is returned to him. He immediately jumps on to it and races off. He is happy again.
- Zakariah and a group of angry parents arrive at the school upon hearing the news that none of the students have passed the national exams.
- Minun is devastated and jumps on Amek's horse and runs to the tree of dreams and climbs up it to reach her bottle. In doing so she slips and falls. Amek's horse returns to the house. Amek jumps on the horse and rides out to the tree of dreams, finding his big sister Minun lying lifeless on the ground.
- The next scene pans across all of Minun's trophies and shows the family in mourning.
- The next day a large group of villagers storm the tree with Minun's father in charge, intending to chop the tree down. Papin and Imbok talk them out of chopping the tree down, instead instructing them to remove all the bottles, each with a dream of a child written inside it.
- In the meantime, Amek refuses to eat and remains in bed at home. As Amek is lying with his family around him he hears his horse whinnying outside and runs out. His dream to become a jockey is re-ignited.
- The next scene sees Amek leading the race and winning on his beloved horse.
- The next day the boys and girls go to find their teacher Imbok in the community classroom and she is nowhere to be found.
- They are driven to the hospital with Amek's dad and mum and several children in the back to see if Imbok is there. She is but she is not sick and greets them at the door. Imbok introduces the doctor to Zacharia and Siti and then to Amek. Imbok has arranged for Amek to have an operation to correct his cleft palate.
- In the last scene Amek is back at the village, sitting under the Tree of Dreams. Miss Imbok greets him and all his friends, and his mum and dad rush up to him. They celebrate under the Tree of Dreams (minus the bottles).