



“The Mirror Never Lies”

OFLC Requirements

Film Title – “The Mirror Never Lies”

Director's Name – Kamila Andini

Producer's Name – Garin Nugroho and Nadine Chandrawinata

Duration – 100 minutes

Genre – Drama

Language – Indonesian with English Subtitles

Classifiable Elements:

Elements:	
Themes	Bajo peoples culture in Indonesia, marine biodiversity and ocean sustainability, family, death and grief, friendship, coming-of-age
Violence	None
Sex	None
Language	No course language
Drug Use	None
Nudity	None

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

Detailed Synopsis

The movie essentially focuses on the conflicts between a mother and daughter, who choose their own ways of chasing away the pain in their hearts after Pakis' father, a Bajo fisherman is missing at sea. Tayung keeps trying to hide the reality from Pakis but finally can deny it no longer and she realizes her husband will never come back, covering her whole face with white powder. Tayung, often shatters her daughter Pakis' hopes of seeing her lost father again.

Together with her best friend Lumo, Pakis keeps searching for answers from the Wakatobi sea. Tayung even forces Pakis to stop daydreaming about her father — and forbids her from carrying the mirror. This difference of opinion and beliefs sparks arguments between them.

As their problems grow bigger, Tudo a marine biologist from Jakarta carrying out dolphin research, comes into their life and brings new light to the sad family. The village elder insists that he stay with Pakis and her mother. Tudo moves into the hut where Pakis' father once slept. Pakis resents Tudo at first but his knowledge of the ocean shifts her perspective and soon she has a crush on the handsome stranger. Tayung is also attracted to Tudo. Tudo may have come to the Bajo village to work but it is clear that he is also trying to mend a broken heart.

Accompanied by her humorous best friend Lumo, Pakis strives to find her father's existence by continually visiting a spiritual counsellor. Tayung herself is drawn into her daily work, catching and selling sea cucumbers, to support the family. She is a picture of a tough woman who is strong on the outside, but fragile and in need of love on the inside.

- The scene opens with the colourful waters and blue skies of the island of Wakatobi, Indonesia, and underwater scenes of the waters of Wakatobi. Pakis, a 12 year old Bajonese girl is walking along wooden platforms over the water which leads to the houses on top of the water. Her mother (Tayung) is calling out to her, asking her where she has been. She sends her off to bed. Pakis's face is stern and sad as she gazes into a small mirror in her bedroom, then takes it outside and shines it across the water as the light reflects from it across the water.
- Pakis' father, a Bajo fisherman is missing at sea. While most presume he is dead, Pakis is hopeful that he will return home. She performs a Bajo ritual in which she uses a mirror to see her father's reflection. She carries the mirror wherever she goes, a gift from her father, hoping that it will reveal a reflection of her father very much alive, as she never loses hope of finding him.
- For Pakis, her father is her ultimate hero, the one who always protected her, told her bedtime stories about the sea, taught her things and gave her wise words. Unable to sleep, she lies awake at night, waiting for her father to return.
- Pakis' behaviour upsets her mother Tayung, who is also grieving the loss of her husband and is struggling to support herself and her daughter.
- While Pakis keeps on waiting for her lost father, Tayung realizes that her husband will never come back.
- As Tayung washes Pakis' hair she scolds her telling her that her father gave her the mirror as a symbol of her entering adulthood, not so she could keep acting like a child.
- At the local market Tayung sells cockleshells and sea cucumbers (Trepang) to try and make money.
- Pakis is seen swimming underwater in the beautiful waters. The scene shows the general day to day activities on the water where the Bajo people live.
- A marine biologist from Jakarta (Tudo) arrives at the village to undertake dolphin research work and rents a room in Tayung's house. Pakis, does not make Tudo particularly welcome. The young children in the village are interested in the guest from Jakarta though.
- Pakis' goes off to school (in a canoe) with her best friend Lumo, a boy from the same village who has a real sense of humour. Pakis drifts off to sleep during class and the teacher scolds her.
- Tudo gets involved in his research. Tayung is communicative but does not like to talk about her missing husband with their new guest.
- Pakis continues to grieve for her missing father, spending many hours on the ocean waiting for him to return. The relationship between Pakis and her mother becomes very strained with Pakis not wanting to help around the house and becoming totally consumed with the fact that she doesn't think her mother is grieving for their father.
- One evening Pakis and Lumo join Tudo on the verandah and they talk frankly about their lives. Tayung continues to work hard, selling at the markets what she can gather from the sea, to make money for food and water.
- The relationship between Pakis and her mother remains strained. Pakis spends more and more time in the ocean, thinking about her father and not sleeping – so she often falls asleep in class.
- Uncle Tudo as he is called, goes to the local school and give Pakis' class a lesson on his dolphin research. He stresses that his research is not to harm dolphins but to protect them. An argument develops in the classroom when a child says that Pakis father has died at sea.
- At the marketplace in conversations with other wives and mothers, Tayung is constantly reminded of the fact that her husband is missing.
- The children of the village spend much time diving in the clear and marine-life rich waters around their village. Meanwhile Tayung tends to the housework and grieves silently for her husband.

- Pakis and Lumo go out collecting water for their family and rest under a tree. They spend time gathering up old shells and washing them. Fishing boats return with their catches of fresh ocean fish but Pakis' father is not amongst them.
- One morning Tayung finds Pakis sitting on the bamboo walkways over the water staring in to her mirror. She scolds her and sends her on her way, telling her to go and help the other children find trepang (sea cucumbers).
- One morning as Pakis is on her way to school she stops to look in a fishing boat that has just brought its catch in and sees a small brightly coloured gold and blue tropical fish amongst the others. She immediately removes it from the catch and rushes off to throw it back in to the sea. She is told off for taking it. As she drops it in the ocean she talks about how her father always told her to return the small fish to the ocean.
- Pakis continues to make life difficult for her mother, refusing to eat the small fish served up to her for dinner, amongst other things and constantly quoting her father and his advice. Tudo enters the house for dinner, and is told not to close the door. This appears to be Tayung perhaps not wanting the neighbours to think that she is entertaining a male behind closed doors. An attraction between Tayung and Tudo appears to be developing.
- Pakis visits the counsellor who carries out a blessing ritual on her mirror. Pakis hopes that this will assist with the return of her father.
- Pakis appears to begin to develop a crush on Tudo. She assists him, along with Lumo, with his research. After returning from assisting Tudo on a research activity, Tudo tells Pakis to wait while he washes. Whilst waiting Pakis takes a wedding gown that is hanging behind the door in Tudo's hut –it is obviously an emotional keepsake that Tudo has brought with him. As Pakis holds it up to her body, she thinks about her father's words to her that 'the ebb and flow of the sea brings change' - everything changes- the sea changes, my village changes as does my body change.'
- Tudo spends more time in the class, teaching the children about the environment. Pakis is happy about this. Whilst playing outside their huts, making ornamental fish for a mobile, Pakis names her fish, Tudo. Lumo is not impressed and wants it named Lumo. They quarrel.
- When they are out collecting water, Lumo mentions the upacara perjodohan (matchmaking ceremony) that is coming up on the nearby island of Kaledupa. Pakis says that she is going with Uncle Tudo. Lumo storms off without helping to carry the heavy jerry cans of water back.
- Lumo is playing with his pet sea bird. Tudo observes Tayung bathing in the sea and watches her admiringly. Later on Tudo is working on his research in his hut and Pakis comes in to fill the water tubs. She asks him who the wedding dress belongs to but Tudo is not forthcoming with an answer. Does he have a girlfriend she asks? Not anymore, he responds. She asks why it hangs there? Is he going to give it to someone? Maybe, he says. To whom, asks Pakis. I don't know, he responds, I'm still looking. Pakis says, if that's the case you should come with us tomorrow to the matchmaking ceremony in Kaledupa.
- In the meantime Lumo and his friend Kutta who is an excellent singer spend their time serenading Pakis in an attempt to get her interested in Lumo.
- Tayung brings her canoe in from gathering in the sea. Tudo helps her tie up the canoe. They spend time working together to unload the boat with a definite attraction between them.
- In the next scene are the preparations for the upacara perjodohan (matchmaking ceremony). Tayung and Pakis dress up with make-up and together with the rest of the village go off to the ceremony. Many are in traditional southeast Sulawesi dress.
- Back in the marketplace, Pakis again steals a fish from a market table and runs off. Tudo is nearby and tries to stop her. Pakis then runs to Lumo's hut accusing him of stealing her mirror. Pakis turns their house upside down, obviously searching for the mirror. She eventually finds it. Tayung walks in. Pakis stares at the mirror and says 'Father...' Tayung is outraged and yells at Pakis whatever happened to your father – forget it! The mother grabs the mirror and throws it to the floor – smashing it in several pieces. Pakis kneels down, picking up the pieces in an attempt to put it together.

- In the next scene Pakis is under a tree on the hill, with her broken mirror and Lumo comes along and takes it from her, attempting to put the pieces back together – Pakis snatches it back from him.
- Pakis is distraught. She turns to Sandro the village fortune-teller for support but his advice is of no help as he just says that the mirror can no longer be used. Pakis asks how then will she see her father. The counsellor hands her some underwater goggles and tells her that they will let her see not only her father but all the beautiful fish in the ocean; turtles, sharks, dolphin, lobster - there is so much beauty we can see with them on. Coral, underwater cliffs. If you want to try them, have a go. Pakis admires them as the counsellor leaves the room. Lumo mimics the words of the counsellor. Pakis runs from the room with Lumo calling after her.
- In the next scene Pakis is in a canoe on the sea. Wearing the goggles, she places the mirror in the water and lets it go - dropping to the ocean floor. Repeating the words of her father 'waves come and go, each wave goes and comes back with something new. Waves come and go - go with boats, come home with fish, go with fish, come home with rice, they go and never come back the same.
- The next scene shows several families in front of the TV watching the Tsunami hit Japan. Tayung is then in her canoe on the ocean and a storm whips up. A tornado can be seen in the distance and the rain begins to pour down.
- Tayung returns safely and the next scene shows Tudo preparing a warm cloth and lovingly washing the white mask from Tayang's face. This is a symbolic gesture, releasing Tayung from her grief over her missing/dead husband. Pakis appears at the door and witnesses this act and the obvious tenderness between Tayung and Tudo. Pakis screams at them and races out the door.
- Pakis runs off to the beach then spends time staring out over the ocean. As she is doing this two small fishing boats motor into shore. One is Lumo's father's boat and she calls out to Lumo to come quickly. As it turns out, one of the boats is carrying a corpse which turns out to be Lumo's father.
- The next scene shows a traditional Bajo funeral where everyone is in their canoes and rows out to the sea. Whilst this is happening Pakis steals the wedding dress from Tudo's room then steals all the mirrors she can find from her neighbours' homes.
- Tudo is worried when they can't find Pakis but Tayang says she will come home when she is ready. Tudo says to Tayung when he works late every night he hears Pakis in her room, talking to her father, waiting for him to come home. She sleeps during the days because she is so tired.
- Pakis has retreated to the tree on the hill, where she puts on the gown and decorates the tree with mirrors. Then she waits.
- Pakis' friend Lumo is devastated that Pakis is gone. He doesn't eat despite Pakis' mother trying to get him to eat rice. Whilst Tayung is with Lumo, a young man brings a large piece of wood to Tayung with the name Pakis etched in the wood. It is a piece of Tayung's husband's boat which has been found along with his body. Tayung breaks down and says, we must find Pakis immediately.
- Lumo goes in search of Pakis. He understands her grief. His father has also lost his life at sea. Lumo brings with him the piece of the wooden fishing boat, proof that the waves have taken Pakis' father. She must now accept the fact that her father is dead and find her way in the world just as her father wanted her to.
- Lumo and Pakis share a plate of rice with Kutta singing in a melancholy tone at the tree as he plays with the hanging mirrors.
- Lumo asks Pakis if she has a dream. A dream? she says. Lumo tells her he wants to be a turtle so he can take his house anywhere he likes. He wants to build a house where the roof is the sky and the base is a big mirror.
- In the final scene, Pakis is sleeping soundly with her mother and Lumo is playing in the sea with a large turtle.
- Dozens of Bajo fishing boats are rowed across the sea with a traditional ceremony being carried out on the water, with people wearing bright traditional clothing as small and large turtles are released into the seas.

- As TUDO and the children motor slowly across the sea in the research boat, dozens of dolphins frolic around them, the children squealing with delight.
- The final scene is shot from beneath the water showing Pakis and Lumo floating gently on top of the aqua-blue water. Pakis' voice resembling the words of her father– 'The sea is your father's home, everything about it is my future, in the water will live the stories of my father, blue, expansive, marine life, my big mirror.....'