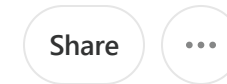
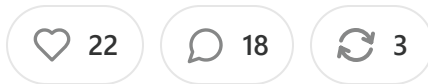


# "Melo Movie" Beautifully Explores Familial Loss

Park Bo-young and Choi Woo-shik share great chemistry in this engaging slice-of-life K-drama

JAE-HA KIM

FEB 25, 2026





☆☆☆ (out of ☆☆☆☆)

Go Gyeom (played by Choi Woo-shik)

## Kim Mu-bee (played by Park Bo-young)

↑*Note: Korean names denote the surname followed by the given name.*

This show was included in my [Teen Vogue round-up](#) of the best K-dramas of 2025:

This emotionally-engaging show is less of a rom-com than it is a slice-of-life K-drama that explores how familial loss greatly impacts who we are today. As Gyeom (Choi Woo-shik) and Mu-bee (Park Bo-young) explore their budding flirtation, we learn more about the traumas that led them to where they are today. Mu-bee was literally named after the word *movie*. After her father worked himself to death in the film industry, Mu-bee tackles her own demons by becoming a director – a way for her to pay homage to her dad’s love of films.

Meanwhile, Gyeom’s career as an actor never flourished, but he found his niche as a photogenic film critic. Though he doesn’t get as much screen time as the lead actors, Kim Jae-wook steals this series with his heartachingly nuanced portrayal of Gyeom’s older brother, Jun. At 20, Jun became Gyeom’s guardian when the latter was just 9. Though he does everything he can to provide a happy life for Gyeom, the younger brother lives with a constant feeling of guilt, knowing that he benefited from Jun’s sacrifices. (Netflix)

But there were plenty of things I couldn’t get into that blurb that I wanted to discuss, so here I go! Please note that there are some spoilers, so if you haven’t seen the series yet, you may want to read this later:

- In first episode, the child version of Mu-bee is seen addressing bullies who are picking on a smaller, younger boy. She tells him, “Tell everyone you’re my younger brother.” K-dramas love to show the childhood connection between the male and female leads, so I assumed she was protecting Gyeom. <sup>1</sup> I was wrong.
- In a K-drama rarity, the central characters kiss in the *first* episode ... and *she* is the one who took the initiative!

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- Koreans are a very practical people. So when you see depictions of guests bringing toilet paper as a housewarming gift (as they do in Ep 3), it's not considered a joke or an insult — nor is it the only gift option.
- By Ep 4, Gyeom is working as a film critic. Because he is young, good looking and speaks his mind, he finds a loyal following. In a radio interview, he is asked about

a critic's responsibility. He says, "It doesn't matter to me whether a movie has a happy or sad ending. But it's rather irresponsible to render the ending unimpressive and turn it into a tool to teach the viewers a lesson."

I found this interesting, because critics and celebrities (and their fans) have long had a love/hate relationship. Naysayers may argue that someone who isn't an artist themselves isn't qualified to critique the work of someone who is. But with that said, then how can fans who aren't artists *or* critics accurately critique the artistry of those who are? <sup>2</sup>

- Gyeom believes that critics and filmmakers have a symbiotic relationship that keeps each other toes. But the aftermath of a negative review is shown, too. The director of a film he panned overdoses on sleeping pills. <sup>3</sup>

**Airdates:** Ten episodes (each running 60 to 70 minutes) released on Netflix on February 14, 2025.

## Melo Movie | Official Trailer | Netflix

Netflix K-Content



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**Spoiler Alert:** At the end of Ep 6, we see the funeral photo of Gyeom's older brother, Jun (Kim Jae-wook). Jun had one of the most compelling subplots. Incredibly handsome and walking with a limp, he is good natured and everyone's favorite. In Ep 7, viewers get a flashback that explains how the two brothers ended up fending for themselves. When Gyeom was 9 and Jun was 20, their parents died. Instead of going to college and sending Gyeom off to an orphanage, Jun went to work full-time. He took care of Gyeom and made sure he got a good education.

In a moment of grief and clarity, Gyeom realizes that the car accident that Jun had been in — which the elder brother had previously attributed to a combination of intense fog and poor road conditions — was most likely a suicide attempt. And while the series doesn't make a definitive conclusion, he was probably correct.

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- 1 The little boy is Jeong-ho (played as an adult by Cha Woo-min). Gyeom is jealous of Woo-min, not just because of his connection with Mu-bee, but because Woo-min is tall, handsome, and fluent in English (having returned from the United States).
- 2 I reviewed a film, pointing out some of its flaws. The filmmaker emailed me and threatened to sue me, saying that I caused him hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost revenue because of my review. [Not likely.] What did I do? I passed the email along to the publication's legal team and they said, "Don't worry about it," and that was the end of that. It's never pleasant when Hollywood filmmakers threaten to sue you for a review that is both factually correct and also subjective in scope. Not everyone is going to like your work. Threatening to sue is egregious and ill conceived.
- 3 It's a balancing act when reviewing anything, because a critic's job is to be fair, but also honest. In this case, the director didn't try to die by suicide. He was drinking alcohol recreationally and took some sleeping pills later to help him sleep, not realizing that the combination could kill him. Do I think this was an excuse? No, because he had no reason to

protect Gyeom. He also had been in the film industry long enough to know that not everyone is going to love his work.

## K-DRAMA INDEX

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These are some of my reviews and essays about K-Dramas (and also Korean films and other Korean-centric projects). You may also read more about my take on Korean pop culture in outlets such as Rolling Stone, Mashable, Victoria & Al...

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JLR  JLR Feb 25



 Liked by Jae-Ha Kim

Love that you wrote about this drama. I was totally expecting CWS to be his usual self, but he always finds a way to be nuanced to the character he is portraying. But KJW! Wow, I absolutely loved his portrayal of the older brother. The way they gifted their love to each other as brothers and family was so beautiful.

 LIKED (3)  REPLY

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1 reply by Jae-Ha Kim



**andrea hak-kovacs** Scenes I Walked Into Feb 25



♥ Liked by Jae-Ha Kim

This was one of my 2025 favourites for sure.

♥ LIKED (2) REPLY

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1 reply by Jae-Ha Kim

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