

Some thoughts on *Sin and Lyle*

A cultural studies professor once told me that the Seneca tribe in upstate New York held the belief that children's souls were loosely attached to their bodies – if they were mistreated, their souls would simply fly away. Infinite Pictures, the brainchild of the multi-talented Julia Morizawa, has produced a short film about two very different characters with a very tenuous grip on their souls.

Sin, played by Morizawa, who also wrote and directed the film in addition to producing, is a complex soul. On the one hand, she is coolly seductive and cerebral in her party conversation with Johnny (played amiably and with a restrained albeit evident good humor by Robert S. Walters) and uses those qualities to pull Lyle into her world as she declares, "I'm going to kill myself tomorrow." In sharp contrast, she is kind and warm to a homeless friend, Joe (played genially by Robert Lyle) with whom she exchanges sandwiches for poetry. Then, in another dramatic shift in character, she becomes violently enraged by the attempted street evangelism of Callie played by Ozma Bryant who brings to mind a courageous deer in the headlights during the heated confrontation with Sin over the cruel nature of a disconnected God in which Callie can neither advance nor retreat. The rage carries itself back to the apartment where Sin literally tears at the news in a torrent of violence – the weight of the world's cruelty separating herself from her soul.

Joel Simons plays Lyle, a young man who is easily moved toward ending his life. There is something innocent and guileless about Simon's performance which puts him in sharp contrast with Morizawa's more knowing and world-weary Sin. It is that same lamb-like innocence that makes it believable that this young man would simply step away from life because he has connected himself to someone whose soul has already flown away.

But this isn't simply a nihilistic snuff film. There are deeper questions asked; about the existence of God and the contradiction of cruelty – and even more importantly; what is our responsibility to each other? Sin and Lyle both absolve each other of any responsibility for their ultimate attempt at suicide, but where does that emotional distance leave them – and us?

The technical aspects of this production serve the story well. For example, Scott Beckley, director of photography has created and captured some evocative images that capture the reflective darkness of the story. The musical performances by Jocelyn Kay Lee and Joe Delgado as well as the music composition by Michael Patterson are beautiful and haunting.

Sin and Lyle is a thought-provoking short film that will stay with the audience for a long time – as long as their souls stay firmly attached.