

E-KIT

# Margarita, With a Straw

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## Synopsis

Laila is a young romantic, a secret rebel in a wheelchair. Undeterred by cerebral palsy, she embarks on a journey of sexual discovery. Her exhilarating adventures cause a rift both within herself and with those she is closest to. Ultimately, it is in the intensity of these bonds that she finds the strength to be truly herself.

## Cast

Laila	Kalki Koechlin
Shubhangini (Mother)	Revathy
Khanum	Sayani Gupta
Jared	William Moseley
Dhruv	Hussain Dalal
Nima	Tenzing Dalha
Balraj (Father)	Kuljeet Singh
Monu (Brother)	Malhar Khushu

## Crew

Writer/Director	Shonali Bose
Co-Writer/Co-Director	Nilesh Maniyar
Produced by	Viacom18 Motion Pictures and Ishan Talkies
Co-produced by	Jakhotia Group and ADAPT
Cinematographer	Anne Misawa
Composer	Mikey McCleary
Sound Design	Resul Pookutty (CAS, MPSE), Amrit Pritam

Editor	Monisha Baldawa
Production Design	Somenath Pakre, Prasun Chakraborty
Costume Design	Niharika Bhasin, Maria Tharakkan, Nikia Nelson
Hindi Lyrics	Prasoon Joshi

## **Directors note**

This my second film - is inspired by my cousin sister Malini who has acute cerebral palsy. That's a condition where the part of your brain that controls your motor skills is damaged at birth. But your emotional and intellectual abilities are intact. When I was 40 and Malini was 39 – we were having a drink in a London pub. I was passing through on my way from America to India and she was getting a second Masters degree there. I said – what are we going to do for your 40th? It's absolutely the best birthday. Her speech is usually garbled and difficult to understand. But sometimes when she is angry or excited – it comes out crystal clear. This was one of those times. She banged her fist on the table and spoke loud and clear for all the pub to hear: I just want to have sex by the time I'm 40! I grinned sheepishly around and assured her it was not what it was made out to be etc etc. But later when I was thinking about what she said, what she so passionately wanted – I realized that I had never thought about her sexuality much. Or maybe I just avoided it as I didn't know what to do about it. This started me on my journey of Margarita.

As I started exploring my fictional character and her issues – the big question that came up was one of self worth. This is a core issue that everyone faces. Whether one is disabled or not. From there it went to a place of finding deep self acceptance and self love. Looking at my own life I felt I had been constantly seeking external affirmation, love and companionship. I was talking to my 16 year old son, my first born - Ishan, about this as we ate lunch together in a restaurant one day. I said – after so many years I finally – HAVE ME. I wasn't sure if he would understand. But he looked into my eyes and said – I totally get what you mean. He smiled gently and confidently. I feel I have myself. And I could see it in his eyes. And I was so proud that he did. I laughed and said – well it took me over 40 years to discover what you already have. You're so lucky. Three months after that lunch – my son died. In a horrible accident caused by a malfunctioning electric razor. At his funeral – while friends and family from all over the world sobbed around me – I felt an intense peace within me. I felt my son's loving arms and presence entwined around me – giving me enormous strength. With a blinding flash of insight in that moment as I cremated him – I saw and understood and was able to accept his passing from this earth.

For a few months Margarita obviously took a back seat as I dealt with my huge changed life circumstances and particularly the care of my younger son. Then, 4 months later, on Ishan's 17th birthday, I celebrated this special occasion with as much joy as I would if he were alive. Because this was the day he entered my life. And nothing could change that. That night I was able to sit down and start writing the first draft of Margarita, With A Straw.

When life hands you lemons you can be bitter and sour or you can make a yummy Margarita with them and raise a toast! That's the essence of Margarita, With A Straw.

The film became a deeply personal film – as it was written in this crucible of death, acceptance and moving on. I wrote from the very core of my being. And this film has captured – all the pain, struggle, joy, peace and acceptance of this time period in my life. Although – the events and characters are completely different.

## **Director's Bio**



Margarita, With a Straw is Bose's second feature film. She was the first Indian to win the Sundance-Mahindra Global Film maker award for the script in 2012. Bose's debut film Amu – opened at the Berlin Film Festival followed by Toronto and many more top international film festivals. It won numerous awards including the FIPRESCI and the National Award and garnered huge critical acclaim.

Bose has an MFA in Directing from the UCLA Film School and currently lives between Los Angeles and Mumbai.

## Press releases

### **“Margarita, With a Straw” to World Premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2014**

-Produced by Viacom18 Motion Pictures (VMP), Jakhotia Group, Ishan Talkies and ADAPT, the film will world premiere under the ‘Contemporary World Cinema’ Category-

**Mumbai, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2014:** Margarita, With a Straw, a film about a young romantic rebel in a wheelchair, is the official selection for the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival 2014 from September 4-14. **Directed by Shonali Bose and produced by Viacom18 Motion Pictures, Jakhotia Group, Ishan Talkies and ADAPT,** the film will be screened under the ‘Contemporary World Cinema’ category and is slated for a world premiere on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

The Toronto International Film Festival has become one of the most successful cinematic events in the world, universally regarded as an ideal platform to premiere films, screening more than 300 films from 60+ countries every September. Boasting a public eager for the best in contemporary film, as well as international attention from media, distributors, producers and buyers along with a galaxy of stars, the Toronto International Film Festival is considered as the premiere film festival in North America.

According to **Ajit Andhare, COO, Viacom18 Motion Pictures,** *“Margarita, With a Straw is a contemporary story that will strike a chord with global audiences. It is heartening to see Indian film makers getting an opportunity to showcase their work alongside the best in their fields. We at Viacom18 Motion Pictures always endeavor to seek out talent which brings with them a unique blend of freshness, world class film making, yet a decidedly Indian soul.”*

Margarita, With a Straw tells the story of Laila (Kalki Koechlin), who, undeterred by cerebral palsy, embarks on a journey of sexual discovery. Her exhilarating adventures cause a rift both within herself and with those she is closest to. The film’s stellar cast also includes veteran star Revathy, Hollywood actor William Moseley (lead of Narnia Chronicles) and the talented new face Sayani Gupta in pivotal roles.

**National Award winning director Shonali Bose,** commented, *“I am ecstatic! Toronto was also home to my first feature Amu. Margarita, With a Straw is a deeply personal film. It is inspired by the extraordinary spirit of my boys Ishan and Vivan and by the joi de vive of my sister Malini, who has never let disability stand in her way. I am indebted to my brilliant cast and crew especially my co director and writer Nilesh Maniyar for actualizing my dream into a reality.*

Viacom18 Motion Pictures’ ‘Mary Kom’ - the inspirational biopic of five times world champion boxer starring Priyanka Chopra will also be enthralling the audiences at the opening night of the Toronto International Film Festival 2014.