**Fiery Love: Better Not Make This Mom Angry**

**BY MANOHLA DARGIS**

An emotional jolt at every turn, this South Korean film, "Mother," displays Bong Joon-ho's signature astonishment at the way people, sometimes those he purports to know, can do such undeniably monstrous things.

As the title suggests, the film is about a mother and her son, yet it is not a drama about mothers and sons, about their bond, because the bond is so seriously strained that at times it seems to resemble a war. It starts with a murder — the son has been arrested for the death of a man he didn't exactly know — and it ends with another murder. Between those crimes, the son, Yoon Do-joon, gets involved in a third one. He is, for all intents and purposes, a criminal. And though not all his actions can be justified, Mr. Bong works hard to make sure none are.

The film is stocked with¿with hotbeds of¿untimely violence. It does not need violence to make its point. Mr. Bong's characters are often opaque and his storytelling detours, stories filled with more wrong turns than a maze, but he's a born filmmaker and a storyteller, and in that way he's one of the most persuasive people alive. He might have been a good novelist, which leaves me dazed if not altogether uncertain as to which plum he favors.

From his vantage point, Yoon Do-joon (Won Bin), in cramped quarters adjoining her tiny alcove of a home, watches a murder, the killing of a man he's never met, from a window in a rainstorm. From her vantage point, she is watching a murder with her son, who doesn't seem right in the head: he's forgetful, seemingly given to sudden rages, behavioral blurts and hiccups of personalised language. "Mother," the film, is at times a comedy and at times a horror story. Nothing is really certain here, even the film's title, whether you read it as an assertion that Mother, without apparent reason, has done an evil thing, or as a sardonic joke about the way a mother can be a monster in some far-from-funny ways.

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Mr. Bong is a very funny filmmaker, including making a precious tableau of the way a child, a beautiful and strangely childlike boy, Do-joon (Won Bin), does his chores. Beautiful and strangely childlike, Do-joon is given to sudden rages, behavioral blurts and hiccups of personalised language. He often goes off across the street. From her vantage point, she is watching a murder with her son, who doesn't seem right in the head: he's forgetful, seemingly given to sudden rages, behavioral blurts and hiccups of personalised language. "Mother," the film, is at times a comedy and at times a horror story. Nothing is really certain here, even the film's title, whether you read it as an assertion that Mother, without apparent reason, has done an evil thing, or as a sardonic joke about the way a mother can be a monster in some far-from-funny ways.

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**Anatomy of a Scene: 'Mother'**

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