

MOVIES

MONSTER

Kore-eda's latest film is devastating, delicate, and layered

RAIAN ABEDIN

Monster, the title, sets up plenty of expectations – simple and bare as it is – and the first part of the story, told from the perspective of single mother Saori Mugino, seemed to play out as per expectations – a troubled child and an abusive teacher, and a mother doing her best to protect her son. The dynamic set-up here would have been perfect for a straightforward drama, but were it that straightforwardly Hollywood in its approach to storytelling, it would not be a Kore-eda film.

Abusive teachers turn out to be more compassionate

and anxiety-ridden than expected, and grieving grandmothers turn out to have dark secrets. Surprisingly, all of this veers the narrative in a rather unexpected direction. This story ultimately reveals itself to be about the bond shared by two young boys as they attempt to find comfort and joy within each other, despite the emotional turmoil both children have to face for one reason or the other. What once set out as a grim drama reveals its core emotion to be one of compassion. This is a film that asks for understanding not just within its characters, but from the viewers as well.

The narrative structure, clearly inspired by

“Rashomon”, is aided by Kore-eda’s direction, which places the camera in our various protagonists’ perspectives. One thing of interest is that the term “monster” is used throughout the film by the different people we follow to describe others. The two boys at the heart of the story are also, at certain points, described as monsters. The title carries tremendous weight in the story. Who is the real monster here?

By the end of the movie, what we are left with is not simply emotional catharsis, nor is it merely anguished sorrow. It is hopeful. The two boys run towards the light, born anew after the storm, in acceptance of themselves.



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DEADLINE: MARCH 25

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