



# The Good Son

*You-jeong Jeong*

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**The Good Son** You-jeong Jeong

***The Talented Mr. Ripley* meets *The Bad Seed* in this breathless, chilling psychological thriller by the bestselling novelist known as “Korea’s Stephen King”**

*Who can you trust if you can't trust yourself?*

Early one morning, twenty-six-year-old Yu-jin wakes up to a strange metallic smell, and a phone call from his brother asking if everything's all right at home – he missed a call from their mother in the middle of the night. Yu-jin soon discovers her murdered body, lying in a pool of blood at the bottom of the stairs of their stylish Seoul duplex. He can't remember much about the night before; having suffered from seizures for most of his life, Yu-jin often has trouble with his memory. All he has is a faint impression of his mother calling his name. But was she calling for help? Or begging for her life?

Thus begins Yu-jin's frantic three-day search to uncover what happened that night, and to finally learn the truth about himself and his family. A shocking and addictive psychological thriller, *The Good Son* explores the mysteries of mind and memory, and the twisted relationship between a mother and son, with incredible urgency.

## The Good Son Details

Date : Published June 5th 2018 by Penguin Books (first published May 2016)

ISBN :

Author : You-jeong Jeong

Format : Kindle Edition 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Horror, Mystery Thriller, Crime

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# From Reader Review The Good Son for online ebook

## Andrew Smith says

This is one of those books where I really don't want to give too much away. It's a claustrophobic, tense and surprising tale of a few days in the life of a twenty-six-year-old male student. Yu-jin, awakes one day, in his home, afraid that he's had a seizure. He's clearly had these before and feels that this might account for his feelings of disorientation. What happened the night before? He can't recall. He's soon to discover the surprising truth. But not everything is quite as it seems, as we are to find out.

Set in South Korea, there's an element of things feeling slightly 'off' from the start. I do like translated fiction as the books tend to highlight differences in culture and behaviour that I find fascinating. The stories are inclined to surprise me as the feel of the narrative is somehow subtly altered by the different way people relate to each other and the off-centre (to me) way the characters live their daily lives. That said, this is crime fiction and therefore the core of the tale should be familiar - shouldn't it? Well, no. Not in this case, at least.

As Yu-jin explores the apartment he shares with his mother he quickly discovers one surprise after another. These trigger memories – or rather partial memories – of a few words spoken here and there and some actions taken by him the previous night. But the picture still doesn't knit together, nothing seems to make sense. What the hell has happened here?

We begin to learn more as flashbacks to Yu-jin's early life are interspersed with present day activity. The plot thickens as we discover more about the relationship he shared with his mother and then of a father and brother too. This is a psychological thriller that teases and shocks and saddens. And then, towards the end, as I began to see the pieces coming together and I thought I had worked out how it would all be resolved, I realised that I was wrong.

It's a gripping tale that held me totally in its grasp throughout. If you're a fan of this type of story, then please do give this one a try. It's different, and I mean that in a very good way.

My sincere thanks to Little, Brown Book Group for supplying a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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## Monica Kim says

Who can you trust if you can't trust yourself?

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You-jeong Jeong's "The Good Son" is my first crime novel, novel by a Korean author, and translated Korean novel in couple of years. Wow, this book disappoint! Slow burning, but unputdownable & spellbinding thrilling page-turner, compulsively readable, addictive psychological crime mystery thriller, and a chilling portrait of a psychopath novel by South Korea's preeminent author of psychological thrillers, it will draw you in from the very first page.

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Although I have not watched a Korean crime movie in a long time, I'm very familiar with how It's done, and this novel had a familiar take on it. I felt like I was watching a movie the entire time. If you've never

watched a scary or crime Korean movie, I highly recommend it, you'll be amazed not just by the cinematography & scenery, but how they execute scenes that are not only grotesque, but the whole psychological & suspense aspect will give you chills & nightmares for days. The actors are so into their roles, you'll think it's for real and hope that you'll never meet them on the streets. They know how to mess you up. Also, I find myself translating the words into Korean while reading this book, that's why this book worked so well for me. I may have to read the Korean version some time just to see how well it was translated.

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The novel starts out with a crime scene. Yu-Jin first discovers his mother murdered, lying in a pool of blood in their kitchen. Yu-Jin has suffered from seizures most of his life and often has trouble with his memory. This isn't a spoiler, there's no doubt from the beginning that it is Yu-Jin who killed his mother, but why? Told from Yu-Jin's POV, a ridiculously unreliable & manipulative narrator, we're pulled into a frantic three-day search to discover what happened the night before. It's a slow-burning page turner, but there's plenty of twists & turns to keep you guessing and a fascinating look inside the mind of a psychopath & twisted mother-son relationship.

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The novel alternates from present-day crime scene & investigation, streams of consciousness of past events, flashbacks, memory slips, fantasies, hallucinations, and Yu-Jin's mother's journal entries, with an ending I did not see coming. Through the journal entries, the gaps start to fill in & learn more about the twisty family past & secrets and tense son & mother relationship. There's also something big that happens midway. ? I can't say anymore, but I'll just say Yu-Jin is sick in the head with a twisted fascination. I'm not getting any sleep for a few days after this novel. I'm scared Yu-Jin is somewhere watching me! I believe this novel is well translated. It's a dark, atmospheric, thrilling, and twisted thriller I thoroughly enjoyed. Highly recommend it! ????

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### **Mandy White says**

I had read so many glowing reviews of this book so I was looking forward to reading it. I really struggled to get into it, the story was great but I think the constant jumping around in time was just too much for me. Just not for me I am afraid.

It is a gruesome story of Yi Jin who wakes to find himself covered in blood and his mother dead. He has no recollection of what has happened. Then he starts to hear of young women in his area being murdered and going missing so he tries to figure out what is happening. It is based on a true story which is scary in itself.

Thanks to Little Brown Book Group and NetGalley for the copy of this book to read. All opinions are my own and are in no way biased

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### **Ova Incekaraoglu says**

This was a brilliant and unique read. Be warned, it was slow burning, in the first 20% of the book the setting hasn't changed- Yu-jin finds his mother dead downstairs, and doesn't remember anything, keeps moving in the house. I started to think I may not like this book, but I was wrong. It doesn't take long after that for the story to take sinister turns and morph into a shocking explanation of everything.

I really liked the style of writing. The ending is not a shocker, if you are looking to have a big secret in the

end- you won't have that. But the story itself is amazing. I don't want to give away too much as this book is an experience you should just dive into without knowing anything. Yes, this is one of the books that you can dive in without reading it's description, it will be better!

I love reading Asian literature, and thanks for this beautifully translated book as it was a great read for a crime lover like me!

I can see this being adapted into a movie, or a theater play- even better. Would love to watch the adaptation.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for this copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Paul Fulcher says**

"I was the investigator interrogating the criminal. But the two were one and the same, the criminal had a slippery relationship with the truth, and his memory was spotty."

"It would take something special to make Yu-jin's pulse quicken. I'm afraid because I don't know what that might be."

??? (Jeong You-jeong) is described by her UK publisher as "South Korea's leading writer of psychological crime and thriller fiction. She is often compared to Stephen King." I suspect most readers will be pulled in by the Stephen King comparison, whereas for me the attraction of the novel is the Korean angle, as a fan of Korean literary fiction. In that regard I am perhaps not the target audience for the book, as in pure literary terms, this is not, and does not purport to be, in the same class as Bae Suah, Han Kang or Hwang Sok-yong say.

This is however a satisfyingly intense psychological thriller, not so much a whodunnit but a whydidthe do it, or in fact a whydid I do it. The novel is narrated in the first person, over the course of a few days, by 25 year-old ??? (Han Yu-jin), a former schoolboy champion swimmer now living with his widowed mother and Hae-jin his adopted brother (what happened to his father and his biological brother, being a crucial part of the narrative).

The Korean title of the original novel is ?? ??, which is the Korean rendition of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, and in the English version the title of the last section of the novel, as Yu-jin takes inspiration: "Darwin's maxim came to mind: adapt or die".

The English version has been retitled *The Good Son* (I do wish publisher's wouldn't do this) and ably translated by Chi-Young Kim, perhaps best known as translated of *Please Look After Mother* as well as *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*.

It opens with Yu-jin waking in his house, confused and disorientated:

"The smell of blood woke me. It was intense, as though my whole body were inhaling it. It reverberated and expanded within me. Strange scenes flitted through my mind – the fuzzy yellow light of a row of street lamps in the fog, swirling water below my feet, a crimson umbrella rolling along a rain-soaked road, a plastic tarpaulin shrouding a construction site snapping in the wind. Somewhere a man was singing and slurring lyrics: a song about a girl he couldn't forget, and about her walking in the rain."

We and he soon find out (no spoiler alert needed at this stage) that the smell of blood comes from his

murdered mother's body:

"I looked back down at the razor in my hand. Clues to who had killed Mother were all over the place, including the decisive evidence of the murder weapon. Without a single clue pointing to a different conclusion, I would be implicated. How would Hae-jin take this? No matter what he asked me, I could only answer one way – I don't remember a thing. The time-worn excuse made by thousands of criminals over thousands of years."

Yu-jin then gradually pieces together what must have happened, fills us (and himself as he discovers some secrets in his mother's diary) on his life to this point, and then decides what he must do to "adapt or die".

One interesting note that may not be known by English readers is that the author took inspiration from a real-life case, that of ??? ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoo\\_You...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoo_You...)). For example, the song Vangelis's "Conquest of Paradise" - on which Yu-jin's ipod playlist has stopped, allowing him to reconstruct a timeline of what had happened the night before - is a song that Yoo Young-chul listened to to psyche himself up before he embarked on his sprees.

Thanks to Little, Brown Book Group, via Netgalley, for the ARC.

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## **Elizabeth Moffat says**

First of all, thank you so much to Grace Vincent and Little, Brown publishers for providing me with a digital copy of this astounding novel from "the Korean Stephen King," in exchange for an honest review. When Grace first emailed me and I read the comparison to King above, well of course I had to have it! As a die-hard Constant Reader (King fan) anything that is compared to my all-time favourite author, I have to check out. Now, I normally hate comparisons to other books or authors but this one I didn't mind so much. I think because it was compared to King and my expectations are astronomically high when it comes to him, I was too curious to see how You-jeong Jeong would measure up. And did she? Well, I would say absolutely yes. However, I feel like her novel stood completely on its own as a twisted, dark tale that wasn't reminiscent of King's work in my opinion, but a great example of a unique author with an individual, quirky style.

I don't want to go too deep into the synopsis as I believe the one above taken from Goodreads describes this novel more than adequately without me giving any more detail. In fact, this is one of those books where you've got to be incredibly careful exactly what you say, because you could be giving away major spoilers. However, never fear, I'm not one to be doing that and I will be as deliberately vague as possible. Set in South Korea, we have our unreliable narrator, Yu-jin who finds his mother's lifeless body at the bottom of the stairs in his house and has no memory of the previous nights events, apart from going running late at night. Our male lead has suffered with seizures and memory loss for as long as he can remember and although he is on tablets that are meant to control/stop his episodes, he goes for periods where he doesn't take them at all as taking the medication gives him debilitating headaches. As the narrative continues, we get glimpses into Yu-jin's childhood and the present day as he attempts to remember what happened to his mother as ever so slowly, the memories start trickling back.

I was very worried about writing this review but I'm relieved to realise that as soon as I sat down, everything I wanted to say (without giving away major spoilers) just managed to flow (PHEW!). I was hugely impressed by this novel and it's one that has continued to stay with me, despite having read it a few weeks ago now. I think this is for a number of reasons - first, the unreliable narrator, secondly, the brutality of the

story and thirdly, the multiple surprises that are round every corner. The way in which the information is fed to you by the author is nothing short of spectacular and you become desperate to discover exactly what's going on in Yu-Jin's head and what has occurred in his past to get him to the situation in which he finds himself at the beginning of the story. It's not a story for the faint-hearted, I have to say. There is violence, graphic and shocking details of this violence and characters that crawl under your skin, give you goosebumps and make you shiver.

This novel starts as a slow burner but please don't let that put you off. You-jeong Jeong expertly builds and weaves all the necessary parts of this jigsaw puzzle of a story piece by piece. This is absolutely necessary in my opinion to construct a tense and creepy atmosphere where you'll be glad certain characters in this story exist only in this book, it's that terrifying.

For my full review and many more, please visit my blog at <http://www.bibliobeth.com>

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### **Liz Barnsley says**

The Good Son is a novel that rewards its readers – a slow burner of a tale, creepy as you like, based around one single character – Yu-jin – who wakes up one morning and finds himself covered in blood and his Mother dead downstairs...but did he kill her? Well that is the question....

Yu-jin has his problems. Epileptic, frequently off his meds, suffering from fugue states, he explores his memory, his past and his present trying to discover his truth. His story gets ever darker and more chilling...the further you read into this the creepier it gets, the prose is tight, controlled and ultimately quite scary, this is a brilliantly observant character study that keeps you on your toes.

The Good Son is subtle in its twisty nature, this is not a novel with a sudden hit of reveal, it is a meander to judgment along an ever darker path, as such it is cleverly nuanced, this was not a story that I pegged the ending of early. In fact it is slippery, hard to grasp onto and somewhat ingenious.

It won't be for everyone that's for sure. Early on you wonder if you can stick with Yu-jin but I recommend you do. This is a different kettle of fish – a beautifully done “did he do it” novel that will stick with you long after finishing it.

Recommended.

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### **Myrna says**

In the *The Good Son* we see the actions, details, thoughts and emotions from inside the head of a psychopath. The development of the story is layered and creepy, yet the revelations build slowly and subtlety. I can see why it's popular in Korea. I recommend this book for a slightly different take on the traditional psychological thriller.

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## j e w e l s [Books Bejeweled] says

### FOUR STARS

I love to read crime fiction from other countries and **THE GOOD SON** is the bestselling thriller in South Korea for good reason. This story is told entirely from the killer's point of view and it's a slow burning, in-depth character analysis of a psychopathic killer. This is a **WHYdunnit**, not a **WHOdunnit**. There are not any shocking American-style twists involved, and you will easily see the ending reveal coming.

I love the culture switch-up in my reading--you get to see up close the subtle differences in values--what's important, what's different....In Korean culture, family honor is a very strongly held belief and is a significant theme in **THE GOOD SON**. Now, mix those esteemed beliefs up with a kid that is a sociopath from birth and you have an interesting juxtaposition of theories to play around with. I admire and respect this book immensely.

**BUT....** to be perfectly honest, while I appreciate the style and beauty of Jeong's writing, I can't say I enjoyed this book. It's definitely me-- not the book. I started out listening to the audio, but switched over to Kindle. I felt the exact same way when I listened to *You*, the story is completely claustrophobic and I had to DNF that book after 50% in. Something about listening to the killer's thoughts without any other views breaking up the tedium is just too much for me! This is a fairly graphic, violent book.

I did like the book much better in print, without this creepy killer's voice in my head! If you are a fan of *You* or *The Perfect Nanny*, check out this murderous family tale. It's dark, disturbing and fascinating.

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### Michelle says

Not only do I love stories of psychopathic children but I absolutely adore Asian mysteries and crime fiction and was very excited to read *The Good Son*.

The story begins with 26 year old Yu-Jin waking up to the metallic smell of blood. As he begins to get his bearings straight he realizes he's covered in blood and his sheets are soaked with it. He's confused. He is epileptic and the medication causes him to have black outs. He sets out to discover the source of the blood. As he makes his way through the two story flat he shares with his mother and adopted brother he see's bloody footprints every where. He follows the evidence downstairs to discover his mother has been brutally murdered in their kitchen. <--- Not a spoiler, I promise! :)

From here we reside within the psychopathic mind of Yu-Jin as he pieces together what and why it happened. While being in the mind of a psychopath can be fun in fiction it can also become tedious. I found the first third and last third of this book quite interesting but it stalls in the middle a bit. Especially in this situation where he's constantly trying to piece together what happened. I kind of just wanted to move on to get the answers I was looking for.

All in all I think this is a successful book as far as a character study goes but it isn't really a thriller or mystery as it is being billed as. I'm still glad I read it though and I'd gladly check out more of this authors work. 3.5 stars!



*Thank you to Edelweiss & Penguin Books for providing me with an ARC in exchange for my honest review.*

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### **Ova Incekaraoglu says**

This was a brilliant and unique read. Be warned, it was slow burning, in the first 20% of the book the setting haven't changed- Yu-jin finds his mother dead downstairs, and doesn't remember anything, keeps moving in the house. I started to think I may not like this book, but I was wrong. It doesn't take long after that for the story take sinister turns and morph into a shocking explanation of everything.

I really liked the style of writing. The ending is not a shocker, if you are looking to have a big secret in the end- you won't have that. But the story itself is amazing. I don't want to give away too much as this book is an experience you should just dive into without knowing anything. Yes, this is one of the books that you can dive in without reading it's description, it will be better!

I love reading Asian literature, and thanks for this beautifully translated book as it was a great read for a crime lover like me!

I can see this being adapted into a movie, or a theater play- even better. Would love to watch the adaptation.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for this copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **David Yoon says**

Yu-jin wakes up, the evening before a muddled blur perhaps due to his refusal to take his anti-seizure medication, and he's covered in blood. It doesn't take long as he retraces the bloody path leading from his room to discover his mother dead, her throat slit with the very razor he now holds. We follow along as Yu-jin tries to piece together what happened. It seems hard to imagine any plausible scenario where Yu-jin isn't in fact the murderer so I'm excited to see how Jeong You-jeong plans on resolving the scenario she's set out for us here.

It's a quick read that slowly metes out information and fills in the blanks. Saying anything more would diminish the surprise so I won't go into more detail. The translation felt a little wooden at times and I found myself yelling at the ending in the same way you can't help but object to the girl in the horror movie exploring the darkened basement to investigate a strange sound. A great, straight ahead thriller novella that didn't quite stick the landing as much as I'd hoped.

I can see how this story would strike a particular chord in South Korea where mothers give up so much of themselves for the sake of their children. South Korea has the highest suicide rate among OECD member nations. Every year there is a rash of academic suicides when children fail their university admissions. That comes with an uptick in maternal suicides as mothers feel the brunt of responsibility and shame of their children failing. It is that degree of parental responsibility that might propel this particular story in South Korea and create an added dimension of visceral empathy.

Just saying.

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## **Paul says**

The Good Son is a thriller that takes the reader down a dark hole, deep in the human psyche. I did find some of the the analysis of every detail of the past 24-hours a bit repetitive, and parts of the plot were predictable. But I would still recommend this one for the original and intense storytelling that you will make you squirm, yet still keep you reading and reading.

Thank you to NetGalley, Penguin Books, and You-Jeong Jeong for the advance copy for review.

Full review can be found here: <https://paulspicks.blog/2018/05/28/th...>

Please check out all my reviews: <https://paulspicks.blog>

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## **Abby (Crime by the Book) says**

Find my full review here: <http://crimebythebook.com/blog/2018/4...>

Loved, LOVED this harrowing & gripping read. The author takes readers inside the mind of a psychopath with genuinely chilling style. There's a decent amount of violence in this book, but the scariest part of all is how the author brings you inside the mind of the the story's culprit. Strong exploration of family dynamics, too. Highly recommended!

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## **Jessica Woodbury says**

While THE GOOD SON has the trappings of a right-this-moment thriller, this is a surprisingly slow burn. Thriller readers used to the spare prose and constant rewards of your typical US thrillers will have to adjust to getting their reveals over the course of several pages of long flashbacks without any of the typical cues or pacing. But this isn't a bad thing! You have to work a little bit in this book rather than getting spoon-fed.

Readers also won't find as much mystery here as they'd expect. The question is not really who committed a crime (it becomes apparent pretty quickly) the question is why. More than that, the question of the book is who Yu-jin is. As a narrator he doesn't give you much to go on. Though after a while you realize that he has told you who he is all along the way, you just didn't realize it.

Something about the fit of me and the prose was not quite right, but it's impossible to say whether it's the translation or the author. This isn't uncommon with books in translation and specifically thrillers, but I didn't feel as drawn into the narrative as I have with other translated crime novels and thrillers.

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