

The grey essays example

[Engineering](#), [Aviation](#)



Introduction

This 2012 American-made movie - The Grey - starring Liam Neeson in the lead role, can be categorized as a superior example of a movie in the aerial disaster genre, although the greater part of the movie is set in the snowy wilderness of Alaska, where the seven survivors of the airplane crash find themselves having to trek through the bitter cold of winter, whilst subjected to constant harassment by wolves. Liam Neeson plays Ottway, a marksman employed by an oil company to protect the workers against wolves while they work in the harsh environment of the frozen north. In the opening scenes of the movie, Ottway and several other crew members are embarking on a small aircraft to go on a period of leave, but the plane crashes, leaving the survivors with no option other than to set off to attempt to walk out of the wilderness, or to stay with the plane wreck and hope for rescue. A classic survival situation.

Evaluation

Ottway (Neeson) is portrayed as a sad character with suicidal tendencies, based around an unexplained "loss" of his wife. In the early moments of the movie, he goes outside into the bitter cold with his sniper rifle, seemingly bent on ending it all. It is only the sound of a wolf howling in the distance that disturbs him, whereupon he takes the muzzle of the gun away from his mouth, seemingly at least postponing his suicide. In a voiceover for the movie, he describes his work colleagues as various types of lowlife who were not worthy to exist in conventional society. The movie portrays him as the only one of the seven survivors who is sufficiently experienced in survival in

the snowy wastes to take charge of the attempt to reach safety. Those who are killed in the crash or die soon afterwards from their injuries are left behind in the aircraft wreckage when the group sets off, taking with them very little in the way of food and weapons with which to defend themselves against the wolves. The film's director has Ottway convince the rest of the party (and the movie audience) that as the oldest and most experienced man present, he is the only choice to lead the survivors, although the dialogue includes some resistance to the trek from one or two of the survivors, who see the remains of the plane as a form of shelter where they should wait to be rescued. But Ottway points out that with practically no food or means to light a lasting fire, they will soon starve or freeze to death if they stay with the wreckage. He also informs the rest of the group that they are in the territory of timber wolves who at this time of the year will be ravenously hungry. The weather means that falling snow will soon cover the plane anyway, making it impossible to spot by any rescue aircraft that may be sent to look for them.

Clever direction by the movie's Director Joe Carnahan soon has the movie's audience on the edge of their seats. The combination of the harsh weather, the tensions within the group and the ever-present threat from the occasionally glimpsed wolves make for a gripping movie. The photography is excellent; it is only too easy to feel the cold while watching the movie from the comfort of home or the movie theater. It is made readily apparent that the men are outnumbered by the wolves, who merely wait their opportunity to pounce, while staying safely out of range of what limited weapons of defense the men possess.

When the seven survivors find partial shelter for the first night, they light small fires and set a watch rota through the hours of darkness, while the unblinking stares of the circling wolves are reflected in the lights of the fires, adding to the fear of the surrounded men and the movie audience.

Unfortunately for those men, the wolves relentlessly manage to pick them off one by one, yet the audience still have no idea whether there will be any ultimate survivors.

Showing what might be considered as attention to quality, the director avoids showing the gory details of the demise of each victim of the pursuing wolves. Presumably to control the movie's budget, those wolves are rarely actually in shot, although that is also a means to heighten the tension for the movie audience, as they are somehow more frightening, simply because they remain out of sight for most of the time. If there is one criticism in that area, it is perhaps that the director makes the wolf pack seem more overtly intelligent and calculating than mere predators. However, in the excitement of the trek across the arctic wastes by this ever-diminishing group of men, that thought did not surface until after the movie was over.

Furthermore, whilst most moviegoers no doubt expect to be watching a movie centered around a fairly basic plot of a group of plane crash survivors battling with hungry wolves, the reality is that Director Carnahan adds complexity to the plot by portraying Ottway as a man ready to commit suicide, yet going on to fight for his own survival and that of the other men in his group - those same men who he had earlier described in the most scathing terms.

Carnahan's directing skills are further exemplified by the footage of the

plane crash, which occurs very early in the film's 117 minutes. The entire sequence takes place within the dimly-lit interior of the small plane, adding to the dramatic effect. The audience sees just the sleeping passengers wrapped up in their furs and their expelled breath in the frigid air of the aircraft cabin. At no time are there any exterior shots of the doomed aircraft, which is so well shot that it somehow does not detract from the excitement or quality of the watched movie.

There is also a built-in conflict between characters in the movie, adding another layer to the plot. After the plane crash, Ottway sees another survivor (character name Diaz, played by actor Frank Grillo) stealing a wallet from a passenger who did not survive the crash, and threatens him with violence. Diaz backs down and discards the wallet, but that incident has established a hostile relationship between the two characters, which eventually erupts into physical violence. However, that is interrupted by the intervention of the leader of the wolf pack.

In the later part of the film, as the numbers of survivors diminish further, Diaz eventually accepts his fate, and waits alone for the inevitable approach of the every-hungry wolves. Although others had died before him, his demise was probably the most memorable, because of the dramatic change in his character, moving from the blustering bully of the group to a man who philosophically accepts that he is not going to survive. That character - as drawn in the plot of the movie - was interesting on a philosophical level, although perhaps not as interesting as the Neeson character of Ottway. In the end he - left alone with the advancing wolves - calls on God for help. This is a man who had at the start of the movie effectively rejected God,

deciding to commit suicide as life had become meaningless for him. It is at this point that we learn his wife had died - a striking parallel with the death of Neeson's real-life wife a couple of years earlier.

Conclusions

Overall, the movie came over as a powerful and audience-grabbing tale, which was thrilling on a surface level, with complex underlying sub-plots. The indeterminate ending (Ottway waiting for the wolves having armed himself with broken bottles) leaves the audience to decide for themselves whether he survives. Not the classic Hollywood happy ending, but instead a thought-provoking situation that continued the philosophical theme. A possible interpretation is that Ottway gets his wish to die, but doesn't have to do the deed himself.