



The Grey

Ian Mackenzie Jeffers

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John Ottway has found the job at the end of the world, working as a hunter for an oil-camp on the North Slope of Alaska. It's brutal, cold, and isolated, and there's little he needs to do but wait for the day when he has the courage to end his life, as he plans to, some day, "at a time to be determined." But the plane that ferries him and the other camp workers between the Slope and civilization crashes in the tundra, leaving Ottway alone with a handful of terrified survivors to face a punishing landscape, wolves who see them as an invading pack, and, ultimately, the prospect of a death he didn't choose in its most insistent, inexorable form. As he battles to save the lives of those with him, he looks into the darkness of an unforgiving nature and must weigh the abysses in himself and the wrongs he carries against what he leaves behind, and choose whether his own life is worth saving, or not.

*This is an expanded version of the novella **Ghost Walker** by Ian Mackenzie Jeffers, on which the film 'The Grey' is based.*

The Grey Details

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From Reader Review The Grey for online ebook

Charles says

A bleak book. A man's book. A book about being pursued by the ghosts of your failings and failures until you die a meaningless death, alone and scared. Such is life.

In some ways, "The Grey" is reminiscent of Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea," except that instead of the ocean, it's the Alaska tundra, and instead of sharks, there are wolves, and instead of them eating Santiago's fish, they eat Ottway and his co-workers. In both, all a man can do is struggle and survive and hope it's not all for naught. Once more into the fray. . . (I was disappointed that the book didn't contain the poem that was frequently recited in the movie - whereas I'm no fan of poetry, I like that little verse.)

The plot of the book is significantly different than that of the movie, as are the characterization and the back story of Ottway himself. Many of the themes are shared, however. Still, I appreciate that the book and movie are different, because I can like the book and the movie in different ways and for different reasons.

I read that "The Grey" originated as a short-story called "The Ghostwalker," and I can see how the story might work better in this format; stretching the action out for 145 pages causes the wolves' pursuit and attacks to be a bit unrelenting for the reader. Regardless, the writing is gripping and poetic and cutting, with amazing passages of description and sparse yet effective dialogue. I'd like to see what Jeffers follows this book.

Glen Krisch says

Outstanding thriller. The novella is different enough from the movie that it's possible to enjoy both as separate stories.

Faith Marlow says

Very enjoyable, fast- paced book. The writing style is very unique. The sentences are often written long, as if told in one big breath. This took a little getting used to because I could not help but think that an English teacher would cringe at the seemingly endless number of run-on sentences. However I very quickly adjusted to the writing style as it seemed to push me through the story with the same urgency as the characters.

If you enjoyed the movie, which I did and it brought me to the book, certainly read it. If you enjoyed the book and have not watched the movie, you certainly should. They are just enough alike and just enough different to make them both very enjoyable.

Faith Marlow

Rebecca says

Better than the film, but the stream of consciousness style of writing is quite irritating. As an ecologist, I find some of the wolf behaviour difficult to believe. Not to mention the total lack of female wolves! ?

Ruthie Jones says

I'm not a fan of the stream of consciousness writing style, but it fits here. The book has a lot more wolf action than the movie. It's a real heart pounder, to be sure.

There's also that old reliable theme of facing our demons and worries threaded throughout the story. The wolves are wolves, but they also represent our fears. We can run from our fears, we can battle them constantly, we can close our eyes and dream them away, and we can laugh at them. But whatever we do, they always seem to be there snarling and nibbling at us. The real courage and test comes not from vanquishing our fears and demons but from recognizing and accepting them and persevering despite the blood and tears.

"Each time they leave us alone a little I wonder if they're done with us, if they think we've learned our lesson, gotten the idea, and each time no, apparently we're still getting it wrong, we're not going the way they want us to go, or like I said they just don't like us and won't like us till we're all dead. Then they may like us fine."
~ chapter 9

Mariochaparro says

When reading The Grey, Jack London comes to mind. I found this wolf-packed survival history of human and animal nature as an opposite to Call of the Wild. Both stories show us how the lives of men and canines could be linked and how these connections remain with us 'till the end.

Iliana says

This pretty much takes everything out of you as you follow the characters and they get picked off one by one first by a plane crash and then by wolves and then by nature. Towards the end I was still optimistic, hoping the main character (AT LEAST) will make it. That he'll follow the river towards civilization, that the wolves will give up. Alas.

Jimmy Singh says

Great!

Daniel Kelly says

There are some really great moments here, especially when the character unfurls his back-story over the final chapters. Here "The Grey" finds some of the meaning and heft that makes the cinematic interpretation so powerful. However, the preceding 130 pages (it's a short book that took more than a few days to read, never a great sign) are hampered by a tough to digest stream of consciousness, one unsupported by a genuine voice or distinctive set-pieces. The survivalist element is competent, but can't redeem the lack of identifiable complexity or mystique the narrator places up-front. Ultimately, "The Grey" withholds its best content for much too long, leading to a sporadically touching, but oft grinding read.

Kathy Jackson says

So I decided to get the short story "The Grey" to read to see if it was better than the movie. It is only 90 some pages long so didn't take that long to read – started it around 4:30 am and finished it a few minutes ago. I had a several hour break in there to so it really didn't take that long to read.

OK, the story is well done – I can see the landscape, feel the desperation of the men, and hear the howling wind as it freezes me through. The characters are far more real and the parts of the movie that I thought were unrealistic aren't in the book at all. Wolves don't really act the way they did in either the book or the movie – but it was way more believable in the book because it wasn't about the den or nest. It was about the men being a threat to the wolves because they tried to keep the wolves from eating the dead. The men drew first blood and the wolves reacted as if threatened.

I did like the book – the hopelessness the men feel at every turn sinks into your consciousness until you feel it right along with them. When they wonder why they don't just lay down and die, you feel it too. When they find it hard to believe that they can still go on, you find it hard to believe too. It shows what resolve the human spirit can have to live...or to die.

I give the short story an A for the detailed scenery, the sense of loss you get when one of the men (and even one of the wolves) dies and the strength of the characters. It was the right length too – much more would have become too drawn out and harder to believe.

Joshua W James says

The book will always be compared to the movie, and in many ways, I agree with those on here who have admitted liking the film better. Both are sad, but for very different reasons. The personal history of the main character has been completely changed, and with that, what drives his push for survival...if that's what it is. There is a scene at the beginning of both that has Ottway kneeling with a rifle in his mouth, and the burden that pushes him to this place in the film feels somehow simpler; more sorrowful. It is completely different from why he does it in the book. Both the film and the book Ottways are dark, damned, lost souls, but the

one in the book is darker, less confident, and less redeemable. I wouldn't dream of spoiling either, as the poetry of how these things gets revealed is part of the joy of the experience. While I enjoy the film immensely, (it was one of my very favourites from this past year, and possibly of any year), I will say this: the wolves in the book act more realistically than the ones in the film. But the film wolves, to me, feel more elemental; they are a force of nature, mirroring the storm that is pursuing him from within. Some of that comes out in the book as well, just not as much. And in the film, Liam Neeson comes across as something of a force of nature himself, whereas the written Ottway is just a man with a troubling past. I do recommend it, though. Especially if you really loved the movie and are interested in a sort of alternate universe version of the story. What you won't find, much to my disappointment, is the poem Ottway recites several times in the film, written by his father. I think about that poem a lot, and was disappointed that it didn't appear in the source material.

Silver says

First of all let me say that there was a lot I enjoyed and liked about this book. I think that in many ways it had a lot to offer and was an engaging and gripping read. It was well written and I really enjoyed the stream-of-conscious first person narrative style of the story. I thought it gave a certain psychological aspect to the story and was an interesting and original way to tell the story. I am drawn to these sort of books in which man is pitted against nature and in return most resort to his own primal instincts in order to survive. I also really appreciated the stark bleakness of the book. I generally enjoy books which portray a very stark and brutal reality.

So I did really enjoy this book and thought it was a good read, well crafted, and by no means a bad story, but with that being said there was one thing which I did find bothersome.

While reading this book I could not help but think that the author just thought it would be cool to write a book about a group of men being hunted down by a pack of wolves. The wolves within the story act in a way that is completely contrary to their own nature. In fact the narrator himself within the book acknowledges that the wolves are behaving in a rather unusual way.

The wolves seem compelled by an almost vindictive need to slaughter the group of survivors and throughout the book behave in an incomprehensible way which even leaves the characters in the book baffled. At no point does the story even make an attempt to provide any sort of plausible reason for the wolves behavior. There seems to be no rhyme or reason for why the wolves are so willing to go through such persistent lengths to hunt down and kill these men, other than the fact that the author thought it would be thrilling and frightening.

I was left to wonder if perhaps the wolves were intended to be symbolic of death itself?

Cliffman777 says

Its a bit different from the film adaption, I can assure you but the feel is still there and there is more to learn about Ottway than there ever was in the film co-written by the same author. The book is intense, unforgiving, and has more of a realistic vibe to it qnd in a bag it could be one of the classics of the past decade, I reccomend this book to everyone who is in for gritty in your face adventure and true-to-life-survival-horror. I

definitely dig this man's work and I hope I read more books by him eventually.

Francisco says

He de admitirlo: me gustó más la película, aunque por los motivos equivocados. Son esas escenas de Hollywood las que le dan ventaja y el hecho de que los compañeros de Ottway son más reales que lo del libro, en su perspectiva más de autoreflexión que de narración. El Ottway de la película (Liam Neeson I-will-find-you-and-I-will-kill-you) es intenso, duro y excepto esa escena casi al final donde grita a Dios, inquebrantable, mientras que el del libro permite conocer lo que piensa, lo que siente, su desesperanza y frustración, sus fantasmas personales y definitivamente se vuelve más humano. Un lector previo de "The Grey" ha puesto en Goodreads que los lobos también son una metáfora de los demonios internos y eso me cambió mi perspectiva de lectura, porque al final, no pude dejar de interpretar que en Ottway huía de los lobos buscando una salvación que de antemano sabía inalcanzable y es al final, cansado, herido, su final del camino (¿la vejez?) que debe enfrentarse a su más grande enemigo, para vencerlo o morir con él, hasta el último intento. Y eso, para mí, es redención. Muy recomendable, pero triste, yo lo he disfrutado.

Douglas Cook says

First lines "Four weeks on, four weeks off. When you're off, you sit in a bar in Anchorage, stare at the bottles, sleep in a motel, if you don't keep a house, or aren't welcome there, and bit by bit you drain away whatever you made when you were on."

Mackenzie Jeffers, Ian (2012-01-31). *The Grey* (Kindle Locations 15-17). . Kindle Edition.
