

PIGEON – Short Stop Review

Pigeon is a short-length story written by Paul J.M. Sliwinski. It tells the story of Earl, a government contractor with a criminal background who finds himself in a unique position when his son asks him for help. Earl is a stoic man led by a code of principles, yet his son's debt forces him to abandon the much-nurtured pragmatism. Thus, he pays 'The Barber' a visit, a criminal who had a history with Earl, and now with Earl's ill-prepared son. Time is ticking away as the dangerous group after the son is getting closer, and Earl needs to leave for a job overseas.

Pigeon has a gripping concept that keeps us engaged for the next thirty minutes. We, as recipients, are never distracted by anything. The writer's attention to detail is fascinating, as they make their transitions smooth, keep track of where a character is positioned in a particular scene/plot point, and implement the three-act structure beat sheet, which is fundamental in writing a script. With that being said, *Pigeon* has artistic (i.e. auteur) narrative elements, particularly with how the characters (protagonist) are crafted and how the story happens between the scene – outside of the script, in the untold. Meaning, as the story follows Earl on a quest to clear his son's debt, we become curious about the things that happen to him and his sons inside the transitions. The word of Lawrence getting caught in the most invidious position has spread quickly, even before Earl manages to return from the barbershop.

Interestingly, Lawrence's arrival is the inciting incident. It triggers the protagonist's journey, who then decides to help him after a moment of hesitation. We hear a lot about Lawrence and are reminded of what's at stake – his disappearance is louder than his direct involvement.

Everyone has their own motives and justified reasons; *Pigeon* has Tolstoian characters who are neither black nor white. Their nuanced shades make them complex, especially the protagonist, who is essentially an anti-hero in the film vocabulary. Do we need to like Earl in order to fall in love with the story? The short answer is no. The long answer is – a protagonist, like every other great character, needs to be relatable. Earl's urge to protect his estranged son is relatable. Relatability is universal, hence the language that *Pigeon* communicates with.

However, there's no information about the characters' age. We can try to guess their age given the context, yet it remains ambiguous. A rule of thumb is to give basic information about characters upon introducing them. The meaning/context will be different if a character is twenty, fifty or in their late seventies.

Furthermore, it's invaluable to mention the dialogue. The dialogue is minimalistic; it relies on short, precise sentences that provide speech patterns for the characters. Earl is not a man who would use countless words to tell what he means – we need to follow

his expressions carefully to avoid missing out on anything. The same could be said for Rick. Rick knows how to read a scene/situation without exaggerating.

The dialogue supports the characters' realistic dimension, two components that contribute to the overall complexity. In its essence, *Pigeon* depicts a broader array of meanings (the title is literal and figurative), and it demystifies human nature (a criminal with unconditional love for animals). Some stories need at least a hundred pages to tell the exact things that this script does in thirty.

On the other hand, the thirty-minute mark might become an obstacle for the film's festival strategy. Festivals prefer films that run under twenty, yet then again, *Pigeon* would lose its auteur value if it tries to rush the narrative. Short films are trending in 2021, and there are various promotional tools used to get to the audience, such as streaming services, platforms and other Internet social media tools.

With all the strengths and unique selling points tackled in this review, we can safely conclude that *Pigeon* is a script worthy of attention. The producers and companies interested in genuine stories with a stable execution and unconventional concepts should look at what this script has to offer, as it's indeed a story that should be seen.