

# The Grey (film)

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**The Grey** is a 2011 American thriller co-written, produced and directed by Joe Carnahan and starring Liam Neeson, Frank Grillo and Dermot Mulroney. It is based on the short story "Ghost Walker" by Ian MacKenzie Jeffers, who also co-wrote the screenplay with Carnahan.

The story follows a number of oil-men stranded in Alaska after a plane crash, who are forced to survive using little more than their wits, as a pack of grey wolves stalk them amidst mercilessly cold weather. The film received positive reviews and did well at the box office, grossing \$77.3 million.

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## Plot

John Ottway (Liam Neeson) works in Alaska, killing wolves that threaten an oil drilling team. On his last day on the job, Ottway writes to his wife, Ana (Anne Openshaw), a letter explaining his plans to commit suicide. However, he doesn't follow through. The next day, the plane carrying the team, including Ottway, crashes in a blizzard. Ottway sees a vision of his wife urging him not to feel afraid, and awakens to find

one of the team, Lewenden (James Badge Dale), mortally wounded. Ottway calms him, and Lewenden dies. Taking charge, Ottway sets the survivors the task of building a fire. While doing this, he discovers a corpse, and is attacked by the grey wolf feeding on it. After saving Ottway, the group



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	Joe Carnahan
<b>Produced by</b>	Jules Daly Joe Carnahan Ridley Scott Mickey Liddell
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Joe Carnahan Ian MacKenzie Jeffers
<b>Based on</b>	<i>Ghost Walker</i> by Ian MacKenzie Jeffers
<b>Starring</b>	Liam Neeson Frank Grillo Dermot Mulroney Dallas Roberts Joe Anderson Nonso Anozie James Badge Dale
<b>Music by</b>	Marc Streitenfeld
<b>Cinematography</b>	Masanobu Takayanagi
<b>Editing by</b>	Roger Barton Jason Hellmann
<b>Studio</b>	LD Entertainment Scott Free Productions Inferno Distribution

surmises that they are in the wolves' territory. They decide to take turns keeping watch for the predators.

Later, Hernandez (Ben Bray) is killed by two wolves, and the group discovers his body in the morning. Ottway suggests they leave the crash site, but Diaz (Frank Grillo) questions his leadership. While searching for the wallets of their deceased colleagues, intending to return them to their families, Diaz finds an emergency wrist watch containing a radio beacon. The group then leaves the site. While walking through the snow, Flannery (Joe Anderson) falls, and is killed by wolves. One of the group sees a pack of wolves approaching, and the survivors run for the trees, lighting a fire in an attempt to ward off their attackers. The group sets about producing makeshift weaponry, and Diaz threatens Ottway with a knife, but is disarmed. They then kill and eat an omega wolf sent by the pack leader to test them. Diaz, as a symbol of defiance, cuts the head off the cooking corpse and throws the head back at the pack, a move noted by the group as unwise, as wolves are the only creatures known to take revenge. While sitting around the fire, Diaz tells the group of his atheist beliefs, and Talget (Dermot Mulroney) states he believes in God. Ottway states he is also an atheist, but wishes he could believe. He also recites a poem written by his father. A blizzard approaches, and the survivors set to maintaining the fire.

In the morning, Burke (Nonso Anozie), who had been suffering from hypoxia, is found dead. The remaining survivors leave the camp, and travel to the edge of a steep canyon. Hendrick secures a line across, and Diaz and Ottway traverse the canyon. Talget, however, is afraid of heights, and loses his glasses. His injured hand begins to bleed again and his foot becomes caught on the rope, which breaks. He falls to the ground and is dragged away by wolves. Diaz attempts to save Talget but fails and injures his knee. The three remaining survivors continue and arrive at a river. There, Diaz explains that he would rather die there than return home to a meaningless life. He refuses offers of help and asks Ottway whether death would bring him comfort. They part company, and Ottway and Hendrick continue on together. Left alone, Diaz hears the wolves approaching. Further along the river, Ottway and Hendrick are set upon by wolves once again. In an attempt to flee, Hendrick falls into the river and is trapped beneath the surface. Ottway attempts to save him but is unsuccessful, and Hendrick drowns.

Ottway, cold and wet, continues on alone. Exhausted, and at his wit's end, he stops walking and begins going through the collected wallets of the others seeing photos of them and their loved ones and carefully lays them in a small pile. A noise in the trees draws his attention to the wolves that begin to appear from the treeline, and he realizes he has stumbled right into the wolves' den. Surrounded by the pack, he looks at his wife's photo in his wallet and fades into a memory of her; it is revealed that she is in a hospital bed dying of a terminal illness. As the alpha wolf approaches him, he places on the emergency wristwatch and arms himself with a knife and

shards of glass from mini whiskey bottles taped to his hand. After reciting his father's poem once more, he lunges at the alpha wolf. In the post-credits scene, Ottway and the alpha are shown heavily breathing, with Ottway's head atop the alpha.

## Cast

- Liam Neeson as John Ottway
- Dermot Mulroney as Jerome Talget
- Frank Grillo as John Diaz

<b>Distributed by</b>	Open Road Films Universal Studios
<b>Release dates</b>	December 11, 2011 (Austin) January 27, 2012 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	117 min.
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$25 million[1]
<b>Box office</b>	\$77.3 million[2]

- Dallas Roberts as Pete Hendrick
- Joe Anderson as Todd Flannery
- Nonso Anozie as Jackson Burke
- James Badge Dale as Luke Lewenden
- Jacob Blair as Cimoski
- Ben Bray as Hernandez
- Anne Openshaw as Ana Ottway

## Production

*The Grey* reunited director Joe Carnahan with producers Ridley Scott and Tony Scott (credited as executive producer) as well as actor Liam Neeson, who collaborated on the 2010 action film *The A-Team*. The film initially imagined a much-younger lead character and Bradley Cooper, who also worked with Carnahan on *The A-Team*, was cast in the lead role, but he was eventually replaced by Neeson.<sup>[3]</sup> Filming began in January 2011 and ended in March. The film was shot in forty days.<sup>[4]</sup> Though set in Alaska, the film was shot in Smithers, British Columbia, with several scenes being shot at the Smithers Regional Airport (<http://www.smithersairport.com>).<sup>[5]</sup> According to Empire magazine, in the climactic scene in which Neeson's character pens a letter to his wife, Carnahan urged Neeson to "channel his grief" over the death of his own wife, Natasha Richardson.<sup>[6]</sup> Carnahan disclosed, in a Q&A session following an early screening at the Aero Theatre in Santa Monica, that he had shot an alternative ending (that he'd never intended to use) showing Neeson battling the alpha wolf. It will be included in deleted cuts.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Release

The world premiere of *The Grey* took place on January 11, 2012, at the Regal Cinemas Theatre in Los Angeles.<sup>[8]</sup> The film was released nationwide on January 27, 2012.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Marketing

Promotion for *The Grey* in part targeted Christian groups by issuing a "film companion", which highlighted the spiritual value of the film.<sup>[10]</sup> Marketing also partnered with The Weather Network to highlight the hazardous filming conditions.<sup>[10]</sup> Open Road Films incorporated comments tweeted by film critics to promote the film in the third trailer for *The Grey*. This was the first time tweets from professional critics had been used in a film trailer.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Music

The score for *The Grey* was released on CD February 14, 2012. A digital version available for download was released on January 24, 2012.<sup>[12]</sup>

No.	Title	Length
1.	"Writing the Letter"	2:00
2.	"Suicide"	1:44
3.	"You Are Gonna Die"	3:14
4.	"Walking"	1:45
5.	"Eyes Glowing"	1:25

### *The Grey (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*

Film score by Marc Streitenfeld

Released	February 14, 2012
Length	35:09
Label	Lakeshore
Producer	Marc Streitenfeld

6. "The Morning After"	2:31
7. "Collecting Wallets"	1:53
8. "Wife Memory"	1:09
9. "Life and Death"	2:52
10. "Lagging Behind"	1:53
11. "Running from Wolves"	1:46
12. "Daughter Appears"	2:13
13. "Last Walk"	2:33
14. "Memorial"	3:41
15. "Alpha"	2:16
16. "Into the Fray"	1:49

## Reception

The film earned generally positive reviews from critics with particular praise going to Neeson's performance. As of November 19, 2012, *The Grey* holds a 79% rating on Rotten Tomatoes<sup>[13]</sup> based on 183 reviews, stating: "*The Grey* is an exciting tale of survival, populated with fleshed-out characters and a surprising philosophical agenda."<sup>[13]</sup> Roger Ebert gave the film 3.5 out of 4 stars,<sup>[14]</sup> and wrote that the unrelenting harshness of *The Grey* so affected him that he departed the screening of a different movie on the same day: "It was the first time I've ever walked out of a film because of the previous film. The way I was feeling in my gut, it just wouldn't have been fair to the next film." The film also earned a place on A.O. Scott's list of the year's ten best films,<sup>[15]</sup> and *Slate* film critic Dana Stevens included it in her runners-up for the year's best movies.<sup>[16]</sup> Film Critic Richard Roeper also had *The Grey* in his top 10 best movies of 2012 list, placing it at number 3.<sup>[17]</sup>

Dissenters' reviews tend to focus on the film's abrupt ending and perceive the emotional and philosophical undertones as unnecessary. Siobhan Synnot of *The Scotsman* gave the film two stars, commenting that "On the down side, there's a lot of dull pretentious philosophizing about the heartlessness of nature and God. On the up side, you get to see a man punch a wolf in the face."<sup>[18]</sup> Some reviewers and analysts have described the film as having an atheist theme, due to characters such as John Ottway (Liam Neeson) pleading for divine help but not getting any.<sup>[19][20][21]</sup> The end credits are over seven and a half minutes long.

## Controversy

On January 19, 2012, British Columbia's *The Province* featured an article about the movie's buying four wolf carcasses from a local trapper, two for props for the film and two wolves for the cast to eat.<sup>[5]</sup> This angered environmentalists and animal activists, who were already irate that the film depicts wolves in a negative light, specifically at a time when grey wolves had recently been removed from the Endangered Species Act in many western American states.<sup>[22][23]</sup> In response to the portrayal of wolves in the film, groups including PETA and WildEarth Guardians started drives to boycott the film.<sup>[24][25]</sup> Open Road responded by placing a fact sheet about the gray wolf on the film's official website, with cooperation from the Sierra Club.<sup>[25]</sup> Carnahan responded by downplaying the significance of the violent wolves portrayed in the film, instead highlighting the significance of man's internal struggle for survival.<sup>[24]</sup>

## Awards

The film was nominated in 2012 for the International Wolf Center's Scat Award in *Scare Tactics and Silly Information* categories<sup>[26]</sup>, being granted said distinction in 2013.<sup>[27]</sup>

## See also

- Survival film, about the film genre, with a list of related films

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## External links

- Official website (<http://www.thegreythemovie.com/>)
- *The Grey* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1601913/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- *The Grey* ([http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_grey\\_2012/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_grey_2012/)) at Rotten Tomatoes
- *The Grey* (<http://www.metacritic.com/movie/the-grey>) at Metacritic
- *The Grey* (<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=grey.htm>) at Box Office Mojo
- *The Grey* (<http://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Grey-The>) at The Numbers

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| American adventure films | Films based on short fiction | Films directed by Joe Carnahan

| Films set in Alaska | Films shot in British Columbia | Wolves in film | Films set in the Arctic

| Open Road Films films

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