

Five

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An accidental murder. An attempted suicide, and a deal offered by the devil. Over 24 hours three co-workers struggle through different stages of grief and are forever changed by death.

Critical Analysis

LOS ANGELES / NEW YORK CITY

★★★★★

Five reads like a traditional romantic comedy when it first begins. It's witty, entertaining, and even relatable. Wino with a snarky attitude and a hopeless romantic Gay man quitting their 9 to 5 job where they are close with the older man who also works there, but they are no longer in the same position. Both he and they become more likable as a result.

But like in real life, these three have more emotional depth than just the caricatures created for them to appear somewhat digestible to others around them. Grief is gnawing at them. Grief seems insatiable. In Five, it is an all-consuming demon with lofty promises that require hefty decisions personified by our cast's greatest desires.

For Anna, it is to be a mother again to her late child, for Walter it is to turn back time and be with his wife and infant before their deaths, for Oscar it is to find love before it is "too late" for him.

There isn't much you can do to stop death or stop the death of the heart, but grief can be convincing.

Anna believes she is not enough, better off dead in the grips of grief. Walter is on the brink of losing his wife, grieving her approaching death while still grieving the loss of his infant daughter years before. Oscar laments his loneliness in the competitive dating world, particularly at his advanced age. This leads us to suicide, a deal with the devil, and murder. The concept is beautifully thought out, but there are hiccups with execution that all writers encounter.

The dialogue reads unnaturally at parts, more focused on the action of the horror. It can be difficult to gauge what is going on in the more terrifying parts of Anna's experiences with the Grey Lady, among other scenes. It can seem non-linear, not in the storytelling, but in the structure of the screenplay. This gives the script the appearance of being hurriedly prepared. Although what goes on within the screenplay may be a mystery on screen and on the page, there has to be a clear distinction between reality and not written.

This makes it easier to read for visualization purposes. Screenplays are not meant to read like narratives, yet it's traditionally recommended that the action be brief and concise and that the scene heading always include where the action is taking place to a near-perfect degree. Stereotyping is common in cinema, especially in horror films. Many horror movies rely on typical characters and plot devices to scare audiences.

We often find stereotypes are really marginalized people or a generalized group of people. Referring to the theory of otherization – when someone differs from a more common person,

they become the other. The other is frowned upon and even hated, persecuted, or even just generally feared. Oscar is a gay man which is known because we are told, contextually, but also because it is loudly present.

His dialogue comes off as campy and questionably outdated. In the midst of the heartache of Anna and Walter's grief, Oscar's desperation for love, and the grief of losing something he could never have Oscar and by extension, his date's, dialogue is starchy with stereotypical syntax and action. We see the Gay Best Friend trope so common in romantic comedies even as he is covering up the murder of his date and in his general conversations with Anna. Walter is known to be elderly if not for him being contextually old, but by the way in which he talks.

His sentences are structured around him speaking in the way an old southern gentleman does. Anna is introduced to be a Living for the Weekend Wino with jokes straight from an Amy Schumer movie, but was once a mother and a wife— she drinks to cope. These stereotypes are there either to enforce the otherization being experienced or by the simple nature of them being created that way. No matter the reason, it all goes back to enforcing the theme of otherization that plays in line with the horror genre.

There are beautiful moments within the horror and the horror itself is developed well. Anna sees her daughter again and overcomes her grief, able to begin to move on. Walter grieves his wife and puts the love for his late infant daughter into a young woman who needs someone like Walter for parental support. There's a pang of sadness along with fear for Walter's run-in. Anna's is mortifying, a realistic abuse of drugs and alcohol as a suicide attempt with delusions of a

worse suicide either imagined or “realized” within a delusion provided by the Grey Lady, whether it is in a flashback or not. Oscar’s is, however, the most provocative.

He is the danger here, he is his own grief personified. Heartache is the harbinger of death. He is a desperate killer, you feel bad for him. All he wants is love and love seems impossible to find. Just as Anna feels as if she was a bad mother and not deserving of life, Oscar feels as if he is undeserving of love and cannot “compete” within the gay dating scene as an aging man of a certain type. Oscar’s happiness is wrapped up within a lie, carting around the corpse of a man whose name we don’t even know, but know that he is dead as a doornail and reveling in demonic delusions of romance he never experienced when his nameless date was alive.

Oscar cannot move on, he just stays in the moment of hopefulness led by desperation. His character is subversive and compelling, perhaps the strongest point of the screenplay. The screenplay is promising and lays out the foundation for something that is entertaining and thoughtful. Trauma is a player within the genres, something that can fit into any place like superhero movies can try. Trauma, grief, and all its friends are a growing theme within the film. Several recent horror films have had these themes as figurative antagonists.

These have always existed, but within a cultural awakening to things like therapy and most importantly the exploitation of therapy language. This does not invent the wheel, or reinvent it, but carves itself a spoke of promise. Rewritten with a crew of additional writers, the screenplay will turn into something that is fluid and

natural without losing any of the great horror elements provided in this draft. The Grey Lady deserves to be on screen!

