

HOMING

Logline: A man released from prison after eight years inherits his late father's rooftop pigeon loft and forms a wary bond with the neighborhood boy who kept the birds flying in his absence.

PLOT/PREMISE

HOMING is a confident and quietly affecting piece of work. Its strongest asset is its central metaphor, and the script is wise enough to trust that metaphor without ever over-explaining it: the homing pigeon, the bird bred to return no matter how far it is carried, is the perfect external figure for a man trying to come back to a place that has gone on without him. The visual storytelling is assured. The open sky above the loft, set against the boxed-in geometry of the block below, gives the film an immediate and specific identity, and the recurring image of the flock pouring out and circling back is both beautiful and load-bearing. The first-flight scene, in which Ray opens the coop for the first time since coming home and simply watches the birds go, is among the most cinematic in the script and asks almost nothing of the dialogue to land. The opening pages establish the world — the tar roof, the smell of the coop, Henry's worn ledger — with real economy.

In terms of plot timing, the sequencing of the central threat works against the material. The danger to the loft — the building's sale and Terrence's pull back toward the old life — is introduced largely through exposition. Walt's speech on the stairwell, in which he tells Ray the building has been sold and the roof will go with it, is doing the work that drama should be doing instead. The audience is being informed of the threat rather than experiencing it alongside Ray's POV. A stronger version might let Ray discover it physically — arriving on the roof to find a surveyor's notice taped to the loft door, or a stranger photographing the coop — so the information lands as dread rather than as data. The notice scene on page 70 is a good scene, but by then the audience has understood the threat intellectually for forty pages. Moved earlier, that same image becomes one of foreboding rather than confirmation.

A second plot issue sits in the crisis and its aftermath. The beat where Ray does Terrence's favor to raise the money and Marcus sees it happen is dramatically effective and correctly placed — it is the right rupture for this relationship, and Marcus's disillusion compounding Ray's shame is a brilliant break point. However, Ray's response of going silent and shutting the boy out sits a little uneasily against the man we have come to know. The scene is painful in all the right ways, but the script does not fully communicate his exact reasoning. Is he ashamed of being seen? Of proving the block right about him? Of frightening the one person who trusted him? Without that clarity, the silence between them reads as harsher than the character, and the reconciliation that follows, though handled with admirable restraint, does not feel fully grounded in cause and effect. Overall though, this is a moving, controlled story with a strong central image and a world that feels lived-in and true.

CHARACTER

The introduction to Ray is really strong. Watchful, physically contained, a man who has learned to take up as little space as possible. The script wastes no time establishing who he is through behaviour rather than dialogue — the way he folds his clothes, the way he stands at the edge of a room, the way he flinches at a door buzzer. By the time he says, "Birds don't hold a grudge," we already believe the loneliness underneath it.

What feels less developed is whether that same stillness exists in Ray beyond the fact of having been institutionalised. We understand he is careful because prison made him careful, but we do not yet know if this is the disposition of his whole character or a habit he is still wearing. Small behavioural details might tell us a great deal: was he gentle before, or did the time make him so; does he still keep the routines of a cell on the outside; does any of his stillness predate the eight years?

Marcus is a notably strong character. Sharp, proud, hungry for an adult who will not leave. Marcus choosing the rooftop over an empty apartment, and choosing not to admit why, is one of the script's most interesting character choices, and it says as much about his world as about him. Where Marcus could use a touch more refinement is that the script is clear about what Ray needs from him but considerably less clear about what he needs from Ray. We can infer a hunger for a father given his history, but inference is not the same as drama. We do not quite see him reaching for Ray's approval, overcorrecting to impress him, or misreading Ray's gruffness as rejection. A more specific reading might be this: Marcus may be someone who mistakes being useful for being wanted, because usefulness is the only thing that has ever kept an adult in the room. That psychology connects directly to why he kept the birds alive in the first place — not for the birds, but because the coop was the one place an adult might come back to. That reading would give the relationship a friction the current draft lacks.

On Ms. Okafor, the parole officer, it is worth noting what the script gets really right. It would have been easy to write her as the system itself — cold, procedural, a force waiting for Ray to fail. The script does not do this. She is exacting but human, she believes in his capability, and she never becomes a villain of bureaucracy. That is a genuinely refreshing characterisation and should be preserved in any subsequent draft.

Terrence, however, is the script's flattest character relative to his importance, and here the script makes the opposite error to a passive antagonist — he is written too plainly as menace. He arrives already dangerous, and his scenes play their threat on the surface, which paradoxically lowers the tension because Ray's temptation never becomes legible. The far more frightening version of Terrence is one who is warm, who genuinely missed Ray, who frames the old life as the loyal choice rather than the dangerous one. If the pull back is affection rather than intimidation, every scene with him becomes a real question instead of a foregone threat. What does Terrence offer Ray that the loft cannot?

STRUCTURE

HOMING is, by design, more a character piece than a plot film, and the script's structure falls into place with that in mind. The ending demonstrates this most clearly. Ray banding a new squab and writing Marcus's name in the ledger beside his father's, then leaving the loft key under the brick where the boy will find it, is a confident piece of visual storytelling. The final image of a single bird returning to a roof we are not sure anyone is still standing on is a lovely closing note.

The central structural problem sits in the middle section. For a considerable stretch, roughly from the end of act one through to page 50 where the building sale introduces genuine stakes, the script operates in a mode of accumulation without resistance. Good things happen. The bond develops. This is not without value, and in a character piece some of this breathing room is necessary, but as written it tips into being dramatically flat. Terrence is present during this section, and the script establishes that he is circling Ray, but he does not act. He looms without consequence. For a character who functions as the primary

source of external pressure on Ray, his passivity during this stretch drains tension from pages that need it. The conflict need not be large to be felt, but it needs to be present in some form — friction inside the Ray and Marcus relationship, small obstacles in the daily care of the birds, or Terrence moving from watching to some small action earlier than he currently does.

The ledger subplot is also notably abandoned in the second half. Ray teaching Marcus to read the bands, to log the times, to keep his father's book — these are among the most delicate scenes in the script. They establish something specific about both characters: Ray's patience, Marcus's pride, the particular tenderness of teaching someone something they will not admit they want. But the thread simply disappears without payoff. A single moment in the second half in which Marcus logs a bird home on his own, unprompted, could close a loop the script has clearly invested in.

VOICE + FORMAT

The script opens with a confident authorial voice. Atmosphere is built through sensory, specific detail, and the mood of the early pages establishes a distinctive and immersive world. The voice does dilute somewhat in the second half, which becomes comparatively functional by contrast. This is likely just a consequence of the draft: opening pages tend to be the most worked over, and the back half simply needs the same level of attention in the next pass.

The script also requires a thorough technical pass before any further submissions. Spelling errors appear throughout, and there are recurring formatting inconsistencies, including dialogue presented as action lines and action presented as dialogue.

THEMES

The script is about whether a person can change his nature, or whether he keeps flying back to the same roof no matter how far he is carried, and this is well-chosen territory. The deepest irony in the story is that the same instinct that condemns Ray — the pull back to the block, the people, the old gravity — is also the only thing that lets him come home at all. The homing instinct is gift and trap at once, and Ray cannot have one without risking the other. He is held by the very thing that frees him. This irony is one of the script's strongest assets and deserves to be felt more consistently at the scene level where possible.

DIALOGUE

The dialogue is generally restrained and true to the world. The best exchanges are the shortest ones. "They always come back." "Not all of them." "Then you feed the ones that do." The writer clearly understands that understatement is the correct register for these characters. Very few notes on the dialogue work. Great job.

MARKETABILITY

This is a small, interior film. Character-driven, regional, literary in feel and mood. The market is not easy for this kind of material right now, though there is always a market for specs and new voices. The industry is increasingly IP-orientated and appetite for quiet, original character pieces is getting narrower. That said, it is not an impossible sell so much as a specific one, and its greatest commercial asset is that it is an actor's film. Ray is the kind of part that attracts actors of a certain age who are hungry for material with genuine substance, and the Marcus role is a potentially magnetic one for a young newcomer.

Casting of that calibre can open doors that the genre alone would not.

PAGE NOTES:

Page 1: "The pigeons pour off the roof and the whole sky tilts." Great cinematic visual.

Page 5: Great visual depiction of how eight years sits on a body — the stillness, the careful hands.

Page 8: "TERRENCE (40s) leans in the doorway like he never left — gold tooth, easy smile, a man who collects favours." Great character description.

Page 11: "And the lock's been changed." This is formatted as action but should be dialogue.

Page 12: Be careful about having characters start with the same letter in their name — Marcus / Malik. It's generally advised to avoid this in screenplays to prevent confusion for fast readers (and gatekeepers are definitely reading scripts fast!)

Page 18: Great moment between Marcus and Ray here.

Page 23: "SCATTERS — and the whole flock lifts at once." This is formatted as dialogue.

Page 26: "RAY: Maybe you come up Sundays. Help me clean the coop." Feels slightly casual considering he just caught the kid trespassing on his roof?

Page 29: "Twenty-five cents a bird." Needs formatting as dialogue.

Page 35: "Perfect homer, that one." Needs formatting as dialogue.

Page 50: Genuine stakes finally enter here with the building sale. Strong scene.

Page 54: "RAY / If they take the roof, I'm done here. / If they take the roof, I got nothing left." Delete the second repetition.

Page 63: Great scene and the rupture with Marcus. An effective 'all is lost' moment.

Page 66: The memory of Henry on the roof at dawn is strong and memorable.

Page 69: "And for the first time, the coop looks like a cage." Lovely line.

Page 70: Lovely rooftop scene with the surveyor's notice.

Page 71: "Sequence After Dusk — Birds on the Wire" Delete.

Page 74: "TERRENCE / TERRENCE (CONT'D)" Delete repeated TERRENCE.

Page 75: " â€" " Weird symbol here.

Page 77: "Across the rooftops, a COUPLE shares a cigarette. Easy. Familiar. Marcus looks away. Not hurt. Just aware." Why a couple specifically? It slightly implies a romantic longing the script has not established and does not need. A father and son on a nearby roof in that same moment would be a small change with a sharper point.

Page 79: "The bird breaks free." "Breaks free" carries a connotation of release and liberation that works against the moment. This is a loss for Ray, not a liberation. Something closer to "doesn't come back"

might be better?

Page 81: Why is Marcus still defending Ray here, after what he saw? Did he not take that personally enough? Wouldn't he be done with him at this point?

Page 87: A stranger approaches Marcus and asks which roof is Ray's. Would Marcus give anything away to him?

Page 90: "The bird clocks in. Not first. Not last. Solid." What does 'solid' mean in the context of a pigeon race — a velocity, a placing? Might just be my lack of knowledge in that area. Where did the bird finish?

Page 95: Ray gifting Marcus the loft and the ledger is a lovely touch.

Page 96: Lovely scene!

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Score/10
STYLE/TONE		X			8
ORIGINALITY		X			7
PLOT/STORY LINE		X			7
DIALOGUE	X				9
THEME	X				9
CHARACTER		X			7
PACE		X			6
FORMAT			X		5
STRUCTURE		X			6
MARKETABILITY		X			7
TOTAL/100					71