

# The Gray Man (2022 film)

***The Gray Man*** is a 2022 American action thriller film directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, from a screenplay the latter co-wrote with Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, based on the 2009 novel of the same name by Mark Greaney. The film stars Ryan Gosling, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas, Jessica Henwick, Regé-Jean Page, Wagner Moura, Julia Butters, Dhanush (in his Hollywood debut), Alfre Woodard, and Billy Bob Thornton. Produced by the Russo brothers' company AGBO, it is the first film in a franchise based upon Greaney's *Gray Man* novels. The plot centers on CIA agent "Sierra Six" (portrayed by Gosling), who is on the run from sociopathic ex-CIA agent and mercenary Lloyd Hansen (Evans) upon discovering corrupt secrets about his superior.

An adaptation of Greaney's novel was originally announced in 2011, with James Gray set to direct Brad Pitt, and later Charlize Theron in a gender-swapped role, though neither version ever came to fruition. The property lingered in development hell until July 2020, when it was announced the Russo brothers would direct, with both Gosling and Evans attached to star. Filming took place in Los Angeles, Paris and Prague between March and July 2021. With a production budget of \$200 million, it is among the most expensive films made by Netflix.

*The Gray Man* began a limited theatrical release on July 15, 2022, followed by its digital release on Netflix on July 22, 2022. It received mixed reviews from critics, with praise for the ensemble cast and action sequences, but criticism toward the "clichéd script and breakneck pacing."<sup>[3]</sup> The film is being followed by a sequel, with Gosling and Dhanush reprising their roles, as well as a spin-off.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Plot

In 2003, senior CIA official Donald Fitzroy visits a prisoner named Courtland Gentry in Florida. Eight years earlier, Courtland was a minor convicted of killing his abusive father to protect his brother. Fitzroy offers him his freedom in exchange for working as an assassin in the CIA's *Sierra* program, an elite black ops unit, which will allow him to exist in the gray.

### The Gray Man



Release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Anthony Russo</u> <u>Joe Russo</u>
<b>Screenplay by</b>	<u>Joe Russo</u> <u>Christopher Markus</u> <u>Stephen McFeely</u>
<b>Based on</b>	<i><u>The Gray Man</u></i> by <u>Mark Greaney</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Joe Russo</u> <u>Anthony Russo</u> <u>Joe Roth</u> <u>Jeff Kirschenbaum</u> <u>Mike Larocca</u> <u>Chris Castaldi</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Ryan Gosling</u> <u>Chris Evans</u> <u>Ana de Armas</u> <u>Jessica Henwick</u> <u>Regé-Jean Page</u> <u>Wagner Moura</u> <u>Julia Butters</u>

In 2021, Courtland, now known as *Sierra Six*, is working with fellow CIA agent Dani Miranda to assassinate a target named Dining Car suspected of selling off national security secrets in Bangkok during the national Songkran festival. Unable to do so stealthily without harming civilians, he attacks Dining Car directly, mortally wounding him. Before dying, he reveals he was also in the Sierra program as Sierra Four. He hands Six an encrypted drive detailing the corruption of CIA official Denny Carmichael, the lead agent on the assassination mission.

Carmichael is elusive about the true purpose of the mission and the contents of the drive when confronted by Six, and Six refuses evacuation from Bangkok with Carmichael's men. Sending the drive to former Sierra Program handler Margaret Cahill in Prague, he calls a now-retired Fitzroy to request extraction.

Carmichael hires mercenary Lloyd Hansen, a former CIA agent kicked out for his sociopathic tendencies, to track down Six and retrieve the drive. Hansen does so by kidnapping Fitzroy's niece Claire, forcing Fitzroy to authorize Six's murder by the extraction team. However, Six kills them and escapes.

Frustrated, Carmichael sends his subordinate Suzanne Brewer to oversee Hansen and keep him in line. Hansen keeps Claire hostage in a mansion in Croatia, at his base of operations. He also puts a massive bounty on Six's head to get mercenaries and assassins to hunt him down.

Six heads to Vienna to find the serial number of Claire's pacemaker from Laszlo Sosa, but he betrays him for the bounty. Six escapes just as Hansen arrives with his team and kills Sosa, while Six kills all of Hansen's teammates and is rescued by Miranda from Hansen. Her reputation is shot thanks to the Bangkok mission and she initially plans to bring him in to salvage her CIA career.

Six convinces her to drive him to Cahill's apartment in Prague, where she decrypts the drive. It reveals the extent of Carmichael's corruption on behalf of a mysterious benefactor working for a shadow government. Hansen sends several teams of assassins to Cahill, and the terminally ill Cahill blows up her home, so Six and Miranda can escape.

Six is arrested and handcuffed in the square. A massive shootout in Prague resulted in all the police officers present slaughtered and Six escaped on a tram. After a long chase and gun battle, Six is once again saved by Miranda, in Cahill's bulletproof car. They infiltrate a hospital to track down Claire through her pacemaker's wireless signal.

A Tamil mercenary, Avik San also known as "Lone Wolf" steals the drive from them, knocking them out, and bringing it to Hansen. Six and Miranda follow the pacemaker to Hansen's base. She creates a distraction while he infiltrates the mansion rescuing Fitzroy and Claire. Mortally wounded as they flee, Fitzroy sacrifices himself attempting to kill Hansen. Miranda knocks out Hansen's men, but Lone Wolf narrowly escapes. He defeats her in a fight, but gives her the drive, having become disgusted with Hansen's lack of morals and honour.

	<u>Dhanush</u> <u>Alfre Woodard</u> <u>Billy Bob Thornton</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<u>Stephen F. Windon</u>
<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Jeff Groth</u> <u>Pietro Scalia</u>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Henry Jackman</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>AGBO</u> <u>Roth/Kirschenbaum</u> <u>Films</u>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Netflix</u>
<b>Release date</b>	July 15, 2022
<b>Running time</b>	129 minutes
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$200 million <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$454,023 <sup>[2]</sup>

Hansen takes Claire hostage and drags her into a hedge maze. After a standoff, he lets go of Claire and fights with Six. Before Six can kill him, Brewer shoots Hansen. She then tells Six that she plans to pin Carmichael's actions on Hansen to gain leverage over him. Furthermore, Brewer pledges for Claire's safety, but only if Six continues to work for the CIA.

Six and Miranda are forced to cooperate in the cover-up, where ultimately no action is taken against Carmichael. After the debriefing at the CIA headquarters, Miranda threatens to kill Carmichael if any harm comes to Claire. Six escapes custody and frees Claire, who was being held at a secret location.

## Cast

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- Ryan Gosling as Courtland Gentry ("Sierra Six")
- Chris Evans as Lloyd Hansen
- Ana de Armas as Dani Miranda
- Billy Bob Thornton as Donald Fitzroy
- Jessica Henwick as Suzanne Brewer
- Regé-Jean Page as Denny Carmichael
- Wagner Moura as Laszlo Sosa
- Julia Butters as Claire, Fitzroy's niece
- Dhanush as Avik San ("Lone Wolf")<sup>[a]</sup>
- Alfre Woodard as Margaret Cahill

In addition, Callan Mulvey appears as Dining Car ("Sierra Four") at the start of the film, setting the plot in motion whilst Shea Whigham appeared as Six's father in flashbacks.

## Production

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### Development

The project was first set up at New Regency, with James Gray set to direct a screenplay written by Adam Cozad in January 2011.<sup>[6]</sup> Brad Pitt was initially cast to star, but by October 2015 he and Gray were no longer involved with the film. Charlize Theron entered talks to star in a gender-swapped version of the film at Sony Pictures, with Anthony and Joe Russo writing the screenplay.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

### Casting

No further development was announced until July 2020, when the Russo brothers were announced to direct the film, from a screenplay by Joe Russo, Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, with additional material written by Anna Gregory, Charles Leavitt, Rhett Reese, Joe Schrapnel, and Paul Wernick, for Netflix, to spawn a franchise. Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans were cast to star in the film.<sup>[1][9]</sup> In December, Ana de Armas, Jessica Henwick, Wagner Moura, Julia Butters and Dhanush were added to the cast.<sup>[10][11]</sup> Regé-Jean Page, Billy Bob Thornton, Alfre Woodard, Eme Ikwuakor, and Scott Haze joined the cast in March 2021.<sup>[12][13]</sup> An April article about shooting in Prague had Michael Gandolfini included in the cast.<sup>[14]</sup> In May 2021, DeObia Oparei joined the cast of the film.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Filming

Filming was to commence on January 18, 2021, in Long Beach, California,<sup>[16][17]</sup> but was pushed back to March 1.<sup>[18][16]</sup> Page wrapped his role within the first month of shooting.<sup>[19]</sup> It filmed in Europe in the spring,<sup>[20]</sup> with locations including Prague, Czech Republic, the Château de Chantilly in France, Croatia and as well as in Baku, Azerbaijan.<sup>[21][22][23]</sup> Filming in Prague took place from June 27, 2021.<sup>[24][25]</sup> Filming wrapped on July 31, 2021.<sup>[26]</sup>

At a budget over \$200 million, *The Gray Man* is one of Netflix's most expensive original films.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Music

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The film's score was composed by Henry Jackman, who previously collaborated with the Russos on several of their films. Jackman began writing the score in December 2021, beginning with a 17-minute-long suite.<sup>[28]</sup>

## Release

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*The Gray Man* began a limited theatrical release on July 15, 2022, followed by its release on Netflix on July 22, 2022.<sup>[29][30]</sup> Though Netflix does not report theatrical grosses for its titles, distribution insiders estimated the film made around \$200,000 from about 400 theaters in its opening weekend.<sup>[31]</sup> IndieWire estimated the film made \$300,000–375,000 over its first full week of theatrical release.<sup>[32]</sup>

## Reception

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### Viewership

Netflix reported the film was streamed for a total of 88.55 million hours over its first three days, which would equal around 43.55 million viewers. It was the most-watched film in 84 countries.<sup>[32]</sup> By September the film had totalled 253.8 million hours viewed.<sup>[33]</sup>

### Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 44% of 272 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.5/10. The website's consensus reads: "*The Gray Man* has the star-studded outline of an entertaining action thriller, but it's filled in with lukewarm leftovers from far better films."<sup>[34]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 49 out of 100, based on 55 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.<sup>[35]</sup>

### Accolades

The film was nominated for Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Photoreal Feature at the 21st Visual Effects Society Awards.<sup>[36]</sup>

## Future

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### Sequel

Scott Stuber, head of original films on Netflix, expressed his interest in future *Gray Man* films, saying: "We're excited to continue to partner with the Russo brothers and the team at AGBO as they build out *The Gray Man* universe."<sup>[37]</sup> After the film's debut weekend, a sequel was announced with Gosling, Dhanush and the Russo brothers returning to their respective roles.<sup>[32]</sup>

## Spin-off

A spin-off film, which will explore a different element of *The Gray Man* universe, will be written by Paul Wernick and Rhett Reese.<sup>[38][39]</sup> The Russo Brothers stated that they are considering making a spin-off film about Dhanush's character Avik San (*The Lone Wolf*).<sup>[40]</sup>

## Notes

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- a. Though the character is credited as "Avik San", that name is never mentioned in the narrative.<sup>[5]</sup>

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## External links

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- *The Gray Man* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81160697>) on Netflix
- *The Gray Man* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1649418/>) at IMDb
- *The Gray Man* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v11614139040>) at AllMovie
- *The Gray Man* ([https://www.imfdb.org/wiki/Gray\\_Man,\\_The](https://www.imfdb.org/wiki/Gray_Man,_The)) at the Internet Movie Firearms Database

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