

“The Station Agent”

“The Station Agent” is the story of an unlikely friendship between three disparate souls. Finn (Peter Dinklage, long before “Games of Thrones” fame) works in a model train store. A dwarf, he is a perennial outsider but finds solace in his passion for trains. His life is singularly uneventful but one day things take a dramatic turn. He inherits an abandoned railroad station in rural New Jersey. For a man who loves trains and craves solitude it is a dream come true.. But his earthly Eden soon has an unanticipated guest.

As Finn walks out his door one morning he sees a food truck parked nearby. Manning the truck is Joe (Bobby Cannavale), a man who could not be more different than Finn. Joe tries to engage the stone faced Finn in conversation but is met with near total silence. But nothing can dissuade Joe. The human equivalent of a Labrador puppy, he presses on. Finn does everything to ignore him but it is a hopeless task.

Finn’s next encounter with one of the locals arises from a mishap. Olivia (Patricia Clarkson) nearly runs over him as he is walking home. She rushes out of her car and helps him up and offers him a ride home. But Finn brushes her off. However, thanks to her habit of distracted driving they will meet again. Olivia is a woman whose life been upended by a singular tragedy which continues to haunt her. Finn, Joe and Oliva are all misfits who will slowly form an enduring friendship.

There are a number of things which make “The Station Agent” such an affecting film. It starts with the cast. Peter Dinklage gives a master’s class in acting. For much of the film his face is an impassive mask but he is quietly charismatic. By contrast, Cannavale is genial loose cannon. His take on the loquacious Joe is so natural you forget you are watching acting. And Patricia Clarkson is in top form as the complicated and conflicted Olivia. And lastly there is Cleo, the young girl who runs into Finn as he is inspecting an old Pullman car. In all innocence she asks what grade he is in. Not a good start but she also plays a role in bringing Finn out of his shell.

“The Station Agent” never goes for the “big moment”. Rather it is a quiet and reflective film that will stay with you long after the final scene which finds

Finn, Olivia and Joe sitting on her porch. The journey that brought them together is a journey you will also want to take. “The Station Agent” is a small treasure.

(Amazon Prime)