



Piggy (2022) or *Cerdita* (the Spanish title) directed by Carlota Pereda, began as a tight, compelling 13-minute short film, but the feature horror is arguably less sharp than the original short. The whole film was stretched out and fluff was added to buff up the time.

Visually, *Piggy* (2022) is stunning. The beautiful, sunlit countryside contrasts sharply with the dark, claustrophobic scenes of Sara's torment, creating a powerful visual metaphor for her internal struggle. It's this kind of thoughtful cinematography that elevates the film beyond its genre.

The film introduces us to Sara, portrayed by Laura Galán, who's not just dealing with typical teenage angst but the incessant cruelty of her peers. These bullies don't just tease; they torment her.

Set in a small rural town, we follow Sara as she endures relentless bullying from three girls, Maca, Roci and Claudia. Claudia is revealed to be an old childhood friend of Sara's by the visualization of their matching friendship bracelets. The three bullies take great pleasure in harassing Sara, from taking photos of her and posting online, calling her a pig, making fun of her parent's business, to almost killing her. Sara's anxiety is through the roof, causing her to chew her hair and eat her feelings constantly.

After finding out Sara was being bullied by Claudia and her friends, Sara's mother "attempts" to help her daughter with her body issues, Sara's mom forces her to only eat salads. Adding to Sara's body issues. Sara's mother is a controlling overbearing woman who constantly demands more from her daughter. There is some kind of maternal instinct that Sara's mother portrays, she defends her daughter against Elaine, Claudia's mother. She chastises her husband for not standing up to Elaine. It seems that she controls her daughter with a "tough love" kind of attitude, which does more harm than good.

The film includes several harrowing scenes, such as when at the public pool the three bullies trap Sara in a pool net, almost drowning her, or when she swims past a lifeguard's body tied down at the bottom of the pool. The bullies steal her clothes, forcing her to walk home in her bikini, during which she is harassed by men in a car.

The twist comes when Sara witnesses her bullies being kidnapped by a serial killer. She hesitates, torn between fear and a sense of twisted justice.

This hesitation haunts her for the rest of the film, she is accosted by worried mothers and boyfriends of the victims. She is brought to the police for questioning, all the while being stalked by the serial killer. His infatuation of her driving his cruelty of the people around her, eventually he gets caught by Sara's father while he steals Sara's underwear, causing him to beat Sara's parents half to death before he abducts Sara, bringing her to his lair. There Sara finds the remaining two bullies, alive and strung up.

Even when she first attempts to rescue the girls, all Claudia can do is chastise her. It's a heart wrenching scene, watching Sara try to explain how frightened she was, watching Claudia beg and cry for the police. Sara desperately tries to untie both girls at the same time, failing, calling herself a failure. She is unable to untie the girls before the serial killer comes back, looking for her.

She escapes, looking for a way out but stumbles upon the decapitated body of Maca, the killer finds her but instead of hurting her, he comforts her, showing her actual kindness as he tries to calm her down. All this time while stalking her and watching her, I think he started to care for her, he reassures her that he isn't going to hurt her. It's the first time we ever see someone treat Sara with some actual kindness and it's really fucked up. The serial killer tries to get Sara to kill her bullies, to join forces with him. She refuses, ends up killing him instead and frees the remaining two girls.

The film concludes after Sara kills the one person who, despite being a predatory murderer, saw her as a person rather than an object of ridicule. Granted he was a grown man, who stalked a teenager, killed a bunch of people and tortured more.

The film isn't perfect. The bullies, for instance, could have been fleshed out more. Understanding their backgrounds and motivations would have added even more depth to the story, making the social critique richer. They are basically only one dimensional cartoon villains. Even Claudia's supposed childhood friendship with Sara means almost nothing to me. A simple friendship bracelet does not contribute to character depth.

The original short film ends as soon as Sara meets the serial killer as he hauls away the three bullies. Sara pops on her headphones and leaves the girls to their torment. A bittersweet ending, bitter for the bullies and sweet for Sara. This is an ending I feel satisfied with, I understand why Sara would just abandon those girls to their karma, it's not a morally good ending but it does tie up the loose ends.

In summary, while *Piggy* (2022) has its strengths in performance and visual storytelling, it ultimately falls short in character development and maintaining the intensity of its short film predecessor. It's a film that sparks important conversations about bullying and body

image but could have been more compelling with tighter editing and deeper character exploration.

Piggy . Directed by Carlota Pereda, Filmax, 2022.

Horror Short Film "Piggy" YouTube, uploaded by ALTER, 8 April 2020,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHgh2ajazTw>