

# Tom, Thanks for Toy Story 3

March 18, 2020

TOY STORY 3 (2010)

Directed by Lee Unkrich

Written by a lot of people

Starring Tim Allen, Ned Beatty, John Morris, & Tom Hanks as Woody the Cowboy

At least these days, it feels very much like playtime is over. I've long prided myself in an imagination that's sustained into adulthood, and a whimsy that's nourished my standard trek through greying tapestries. Life only gets harder as responsibility and perspective begin to outweigh one's time spent wondering and wandering. For a while now, I've really fought to find my wonder & wander, though I've tried and I've toiled over what its quiet off-season might mean. Maybe it's time for someone else to wonder & wander, but I'm not ready to fully accept it yet. If this viewing of Toy Story 3 is any indication, they both still live inside me. Normally, I wouldn't think it enough that I was moved by such a famously evocative film, but it just happened so quickly. It wasn't the hand-holding in the fire swirl, or even just Andy's farewell, it happened in under five minutes, when a refrain of *You've Got a Friend in Me* trickled in, sounding as much older as I am, but far less confused, endlessly more grounded in the certainty that, yes, I have.

I've seen TS3 a bunch of times, of course, but perhaps never by myself, and wow, that'll give you a new experience. Because suddenly, you're free to attach your entire history to this fateful adventure, and let it colour in the burnt sepia of your memory. It's interesting that not all film genres work this way; I wouldn't enjoy a solo-viewing of Mission Impossible quite the same, but I guess Toy Story *always* was just about one kid, lost in imagination - *you*. We knew, coming into this third installment, what we were in for. The trailer featured a Randy Newman track called Losing You, which ultimately doesn't play in the film (it was written for New Orleans, post Hurricane Katrina), but it had done its job of conveying that Andy is ready to leave for college, and the toys will miss him dearly; in fact, they've been missing him for a long time. When we join up, their latest scheme is already in progress: They must retrieve Andy's cell phone, hide it within the toy box, and use the landline to call it. The mechanism works - Andy seeks out the sound of his ringer, casting warm light and his curious stare on their gaggle once again, and when he answers "Hello?" we close in on Woody, clutching the cordless, aching from the emptiness of Andy's first words to him in years. They thought they could trick him into playing, but growing up doesn't work that way; you can't unring a phone.

Apropos of my earlier feelings on the original Toy Story, I should mention a popular Easter Egg in 3, which is that ol' Sid Phillips cameos as the gleefully hyperactive waste collector. I can't tell if this is yet another dig at Sid, or a sign that he's rallied from the trauma of his youth and has wound up happy and gainfully employed. There's indeed a stark contrast between Andy's collegiate prospects and Sid's inability to get a new shirt. Whatever the intent, #JusticeForSid.

A third resolute plot ensues in which the toys are separated and must reunite to choose either the past or the future. The series remains committed to themes of existentialism, impermanence, and the inevitability of worldly rejection, but it's balanced by an ultimate thesis about sticking together, and the conclusion is drawn in the first act when Woody and Buzz affirm their pact of "infinity and beyond." Woody is devoted to the group's roots more than anyone, which is understandable because Woody's had the longest tenure as Fave-Toy, though I do sense something missing in his life-story. We learned in the previous film that Woody is a collector's item from the days of a 50's serialized TV program, and (during the yard sale scene) that he's an old family toy. Did Woody have a kid before Andy? Was it Andy's mom? If so, why isn't he more at peace with the natural cycle of a child growing up? I genuinely hope one day we find out.

At the risk of dating the piece, I'd like to identify that, as I write this, the world is largely in quarantine from the outbreak of COVID-19. TH and his wife Rita Wilson were among the very first famous people to test positive for the virus, and though he's recovering out of hospital, the general sense of rawness in the world has me feeling more touchy about him than usual. Either that or cabin fever might explain the visceral response I had to the end of Toy Story 3, this go around, but, friend, it wasn't pretty. I watched Andy kneel in the grass and I felt its coolness as if to touch, and one by one, I said goodbye to once-endless days as I let the wonder & wander fill my body. I choked when Andy promised the new kid that Woody would never give up on her, that he'd be there for her no matter

what, and I watched through a total blur as he drove off into the sunset, and we tilted up to the clouds, clouds so much like the ones on the bedroom wall, years ago when the wonder & wander came easy.

But the clouds in the sky aren't exactly like the clouds on the bedroom wall - they're real. The walls have come down for Andy, and us too; they've come down for all of us who've travelled the same distance. The lengths to which we may wonder, the distances to which we may wander know no boundaries. Even if what we used to call "playtime" is over, wouldn't the kids we used to be care so much more about the world we've yet to see? Because the walls are down, and we're free to wonder & wander, to infinity and beyond.

Thx!

PS. And that's it, right? There were no more Toy Story movies... right?