

Before I Fall - movie review

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March 22, 2017



I am sure that any Bill Murray or Puxatawny Phil fan is familiar with the wonderful film entitled “Ground Hog Day.” It’s about a selfish, miserable man who is taught how to love by having to repeat the same day over and over and over again.

Using the same theme, “Before I Fall” is the story of a basically good high school senior who is put in the same situation over and over again until she learns how not to be just O.K., but to truly love others.

The protagonist Samantha Kingston is the big sister in a basically good suburban family of four. She is not particularly nice to her baby sister who idolizes her. Likewise, she seems to basically ignore her father and has conflicts with her mother.

But she and her three best friends are like the 4 horsemen; they do everything together. Although the ring leader often talks behind the others’ backs, they are as close to each other as any high school seniors could be. They travel to and fro from school together every day and spend every spare moment together.

The four of them jointly detest Juliet who although she was the ringleader’s best friend in third grade, is a dark depressing artist, seemingly on the verge of suicide at any moment, because she doesn’t have even one friend. They constantly make snide remarks about her in the school cafeteria and when she shows up at a party, they literally attack her spiritually and physically. Then there is the lesbian, who knows that nobody in the school likes her.

It’s the big night of the year called “Cupids Day” and Sam is given a condom by her friends because she is ready to lose her virginity with Rob, one of the coolest boys in the school. At the party, the girls continue to torment Juliet who leaves the party humiliated and ready to commit suicide.

On their way home the girls suddenly strike something on the highway and the next thing you know, Sam is waking up again, but it’s the beginning of the same day.

Like Bill Murray, she will relive this day several times. One day she won’t care about anything and starts being brutally honest with her girlfriends. In the midst of it all, there is this sweet boy whom she was buddies with in third grade but has ignored ever since. He even gives her a rose on Cupid’s Day, but she purposely leaves it on her desk and refuses to come to his party that night.

But by the 4th time of reliving the same day she decides that she wants to make an impact in the world and in the lives of those with whom she interacts. First, she will start being loving to her baby sister. Then she will make peace with her Mother. She even starts to relate to the lesbian in her class and the dark artist. Finally, she just makes that slide from being just a basically good person, affected by teenage social mores to a genuinely fair, honest and decent human being. She wonders why the girls have always mistreated Juliet and starts to relate to the sweet boy asking him why he has always been so kind to her.

I won’t betray the ending, but suffice it to say that this movie had a deep impact upon my psyche.

In a recent conversation with my adult son, he told me in a loving way that I am incredibly selfish. That is to say that he pointed out how I can no longer just live for myself. I cannot justify doing what I believe is right if it might have a negative impact on my wife, my family, my job or my church.

A friend once told me that the only rules I liked or obeyed were those that benefited me. Sadly, I think he hit the nail right on the head. I know that we are all selfish to some degree, I may be more than most. But this simple film left me really looking at my life and how easy it would be to stop arguing with the world and just simply do what I know is right in the eyes of God.

You most likely have never heard about this movie and I am sure it won’t make much money as I was literally the lone patron for the \$4.25 matinee viewing. The film should be available on your Netflix, Red Box or DVD very soon. I hope that something that I have shared will inspire you to rent it.