

The Boys Are Back

The Boys Are Back (Oct. 10, 2009) Carol Wong

This movie is different from the first two I've reviewed in that it is not a sci-fi adventure flick. OK, I admit what drew me to this movie originally was that Clive Owen was playing the main character. However, I do feel the entire cast including the child actors playing the two sons did an excellent job. The writer and director worked together to create a moving storyline about loss and grief. I felt this movie had much to offer and didn't sacrifice reality in order to wrap things up in a nice neat package at the end.

The basic plot involves the father of two boys, Joe. Joe has had two sons from two marriages. The first son he had with his first wife is Harry. Joe divorced his first wife sometime ago and Harry has been living in England with his mom for most of his growing up years. The second son, Artie, is the one he lives with at present with his second wife. When they discover she has a rapidly advanced form of cancer, there is little time for Joe to prepare for her death let alone time for him to grieve and plan for the future without her. After his wife's death, Joe is left alone with the care of his 6 year old son, Artie. He is faced with the reality of finding adequate childcare, something he never had to deal with when his wife was alive. On top of that, he gets a call from his first wife and she tells him that his now 13 year old son Harry wants to come to Australia to spend some time with his dad. So Joe not only has to find adequate childcare for his son, Artie, he has to try and re-establish a relationship with his teen-age son, Harry whom he hasn't seen in 7 years. What was interesting to me was to watch the interaction between Joe and his two sons. Of course he is much more in tune with Artie because he's been with him from birth and seen him on a regular basis. It becomes evident that his relationship with Harry is going to be a "work in progress." Harry is appalled at the way Joe manages (or mismanages) his household, with water balloon games inside the house and dirty dishes everywhere. On top of that, Harry still holds resentment that his father left him in England and went off to Australia to start another family. My heart went out to Harry as he tries to sort through his emotions and yet still "do the right thing" and help his dad with chores and help watch little brother, Artie. There is one scene where Joe asks Harry to throw out the trash while Harry is watching TV. Joe gets mad and says "Oh, I just do it myself" and then as a result of a tug-of-war with the trash bag, it bursts and all the trash goes all over the floor. Sound familiar? I know you could have put me and my son in the place of Joe and Harry and the resulting chaos would be the same. This movie was good in that it did not "dumb down" the heartbreak and reality of divorce and the extreme grief experienced when someone we love dies suddenly. I felt really connected to the characters and wanted so much for everything to work out for them in the end. However, because of the reality of what had happened to Joe, Harry and Artie, I knew it could only be a temporary fix that they would have to continue to work through their grief and anguish. The hope lies in Joe, now aware of his failings, making a commitment to be a better dad to both of his sons. What struck me most was how much Joe cared about Harry, the son he had left behind. It was obviously difficult for Joe to hear from Harry how he missed his dad and wanted Joe to take him at the time of the divorce. Yet, Joe makes an extraordinary effort to re-connect with Harry, even beyond maybe what I would have thought possible. Raising a teenager is hard enough, as we parents of older children can all attest, but it can only be ten times more difficult when that child has grown up in another home, and with no shared custody or weekly visits to help solidify the relationship from the beginning. Joe does not give up however, despite being rebuffed several times. When Harry leaves suddenly to go back to England, Joe pursues him and lets him know how much he cares by giving Harry another chance at getting re-acquainted with his father and little stepbrother Artie. I felt tremendously encouraged by this. In the spiritual realm, I have often felt like I came into God's family broken, dysfunctional and useless. I have not always felt important or special to God, my father. Even though I knew in my head that the Lord loved me, I have needed constant assurance that the Lord really loved me for myself. In the same way that Harry longed to know his father, Joe, in person, I have longed for a more personal and intimate relationship with my heavenly Father. Currently I am learning more and more how much the Lord loves me and wants me to spend time with Him. I have felt personally loved by my Father as I have learned to appreciate all the different ways He communicates with me. Also, as I've been getting to know the Lord better, I feel like He's given me new revelations about myself. He also lets me know it's OK when I mess up. He knows the weakest and ugliest parts of me and He loves me just the same. I now have more of a security in "knowing" God the Father, rather than just knowing things about Him. I have heard the Lord's voice and His voice is familiar to me now. I am overwhelmed and awed by the fact that the Lord of the universe loves and cares about me as a person. Like Harry in "The Boys are Back," I feel like I am getting a second chance at knowing who my Father is and receiving the awesome love He has for me.