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Movie Review

The Animal Kingdom. Directed by Edward H. Griffith, 1932.

Movie review | written 2008 | edited 2017

The Animal Kingdom is a drama about Cee's efforts to dominate and control her husband-to-be's life by manipulating him to do what she wants.

Cee claims she knows who Tom is as a person and what's best for him, especially all the good decisions she'll help him make when they are wed. Cee confides all of this to Tom's good friend, Owen, deliberately leaving out that the "good decisions" are solely for her benefit. Daisy, best friend and former lover, still loves Tom dearly. At the announcement of his engagement to Cee, she's hurt and wants to cut all ties with him.

Jealous of the depth of Tom and Daisy's relationship, they know the ins and outs of each other very well; Cee attempts a direct sabotage of her fiancé'. Unaware of Cee's invisible wand, Tom begins to feel uncertain about his friendship with Daisy, his father, friends, and work. Overtime, he weakens to Cee's guilt-stricken demands.

The film's end is smart and gingerly played out. With the aid of several glasses of champagne, Tom finds clarity. The tone of the final scenes leans one direction but takes another path. Both are unexpected twists, and pose the question: Will Tom feast on prey, or be feasts of prey? The title, *The Animal Kingdom*, is a great choice for identifying the metaphoric symbolism of the animal kingdom's hierarchy. Tom unconsciously morphs, by influence of Cee and Daisy, throughout the film just as animals evolve with the changes in their environments and conditions throughout their lives.

It is curious to watch scenes and characters develop emotions with the lack of a continuous soundtrack. Without musical triggers guiding the viewer, one focuses more on the dialogue and character interactions. This allows for personal end-of-story predictions to arise rather than be the puppet that encourage thought or reaction toward a specific outcome.

Actress Myrna Loy has worked with Director Edward H. Griffith and Screenwriter Horace Jackson once before in the 1931 film *Rebound*.

