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A Transcendental Storytelling

Kimi no Na wa

It is too grand, too transcendental to call upon words. The haunting beauty of Itomori lake, enclaved by twinkles of houses' lights, silences every observer. Any intelligible sound, even the breathless whispers, is drowned in the circular, central, and centripetal lake. As an audience, you intrinsically know that tonight is too sacred to summon words. Mitsuha should've known better too. She should've known that any careless word can be granted in the face of the unfolding rebirth. But the unruliness and defiance of a teenager cannot be chastised either. We've all been there, done that. So when she wishes upon the stars to be a «handsome boy from Tokyo in her next life,» life doesn't disappoint her.

This is when we are plunged into Kimi no Na wa's rabbit hole, a place where the end is indistinguishable from the beginning. For those who may not be familiar, Kimi no Na wa (translated to Your Name in English) is a 2016 Japanese anime directed by Makoto Shinkai and is the highest-grossing anime film worldwide of all time. It follows two teenagers, Taki and Mitsuha, trapped in a mind-boggling, time-warping body swap. And the story follows their journey of unraveling the mystery of their body-switching to untangling the phantasmagorical twist of time.

Kimi no Na wa is riddled with Japanese cultural cues. The story toys

with the Red String of Fate throughout the movie. From the first flashes of the famous scene, where Mitsuha loses her red cord in the train, we are introduced to the significance the red cord plays in bringing Mitsuha and Taki together. Yet, the idea of fate plays a much bigger role in the movie than just displaying a red artifact.

Kimi no Na Wa is such a grand film, with so many twists and turns that it becomes too easy to be lost in the incidental transitions of the story. It is too easy to believe that there is no structure in the plot, that it is just an implosion with no clear direction. But however unfathomable the plot may seem, there are clear signs that make the story rooted in some certainty. Like how Mitsuha and Taki were able to find each other at last, or the way that each Miyamizu woman were able to bend the flow of the time, or the reappearance of Comet after centuries. Even if the story seems too wild, I think fate and destiny have thrown some semblance of certainty to it.

Another cultural cue that Kimi no Na wa alludes to is the magic of twilight. After being switched in their bodies, Mitsuha and Taki aren't able to see each other in the mountaintop until the magic hour or Kataware-Doki. When the twilight falls, they can finally return to their bodies and see each other in person, in a timeless setting. They can see each other then, because the twilight is a reset. And they can meet each other regardless of the time order because the twilight is the witching hour. A time that allows beings to come to fruition that can't exist in light.

As an audience, what truly resonated with me about the movie was the feeling of missing and dislocation. After the dust has fallen down, after the

warped time was set to chronological order, the story didn't contend itself with an abrupt ending. Because it couldn't carelessly set aside the residual feelings as if nothing happened. And the protagonists' quest to find closure brought a bittersweet feeling to the surface. How many of us are roaming in life, searching and wandering, for something to finally put our turmoil to rest? Taki and Mitsuha, after all the drama, were left with such a deep, unknown yearning much bigger than themselves. Their peering glances, their dissociation with their surroundings, their looks behind their shoulders are painfully real to me as a human.

While their search had a sweet ending, the same cannot be said for other people. Sometimes, I muse how many people must've had a crazy story like Taki and Mitsuha that didn't end well. In turn, how many people haven't experienced the same roller-coaster but haven't reached the peace within either. At the same time, I believe the never-ending quest to find something to complete us is what makes us human. And no matter how far we reach, no matter how old we become, we'll always be locked in the paralysis of longing and yearning.

Whatever the case, *Kimi no Na wa* is the story of life. It is, in essence, a film about the possibility of steadfast, heartfelt emotional connection to transcend logical impossibilities. And with skillful animation, deft and intricate storytelling, it shocks no one that it has been named one of the best animes in history. And if it wasn't named as one, the movie's true beauty wouldn't stop it from being remembered and revered.