

"PARANORMAL" Anxiety

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
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While admittedly impulsive—it's mere hours since I saw the film—I'm inclined to believe that PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 3 is the best of the series. It seeped into me in a way the first two failed to. And as much as the ghostly proceedings are to blame (I'm outright terrified of the idea of apparitions and the like), there's something else that kept me uncomfortable throughout; the fear of real adulthood. [SPOILERS abound]

Staring down my mid-twenties, I'm in the midst of a perpetual youth where most of my income goes to any combination of a) beer b) my girlfriend c) food and d) cinema. There's a far off distance (that's not so far off) in which I'd like to own a house, be happily married and have a family, yet I'm now somewhat afraid PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 3 has taught me that absolutely no sense of confidence or security comes alongside this.

The moment the stress started to mount, I was watching the two child protagonists, Katie and Kristi, faux-camp outside in the backyard. Instead of leering jealously and thinking enthusiastically, "fuck yeah backyard camping trip," I worried I'd be entirely too fearful to let my (hypothetical) children sleep outside, while I nestled snugly in. Any number of things could go wrong, and where exactly would I be? It soon became clear that the threat in this sequence, spectrally speaking, wasn't concerned with the tent and having some fair confidence the girls weren't in harm's way, I started to realize it was merely the prospect of them being out and myself being in, that tore me apart. And as the film wore on, a whole slew of societal norms that come with "family life" all of a sudden seemed absolutely horrifying.

[Here there be SPOILERS]

Almost in succession, PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 3 hits the main stressors of eventual adulthood. The kids find themselves separated from their parents (Julie and stepfather Dennis, who brings a whole other subject into the mix) on at least two occasions. One of which is a standard "date night," and the other a required doctor's visit that seem to only emphasize just how vulnerable your kids can be, regardless of who's watching them, *or* who's playing Bloody Mary with them. Babysitters are no protectors; they're actively standing by the door waiting to

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leave, when you get home (incidentally, the best intended scare of the film happens amidst a babysitting session).



Also on deck is the financial strain, as a snide comment is made to impart that new husband Dennis isn't as stable as he should be, merely piggybacking on his well-off wife, Julie. While the scrutiny that comes with such can be overbearing (and might even be true, the recklessness and childish nature of grown males seem to be a theme in these movies), it also leads to a bigger issue, the scrutiny of in-laws.

[Seriously, here be SPOILERS]

In her limited screen time, Grandma makes two things clear: a) she has serious concern over new husband Dennis and b) she's grade-a evil. Of course, not all grandmas lean the way of the witch, but this is "extreme fears realized" and Granny (with that grey straw hair acting as a neon warning) conveys that despite his obvious love and concern for the new little girls in his life, their love for him and Julie's love for all, he is unfit for her daughter. After a visit to her house (in which she makes the married couple sleep in separate beds!), Grandma manipulates her daughter into a mindless, suspended, trance state and Dennis' death becomes particularly poignant after putting forth all his energy to protect his family (while admittedly carrying around that goddamn camera), Grandma literally *bends him over backwards* to a point he can't handle; and then exudes her desired influence and control over the children.

It's entirely feasible I'm projecting standard and recent apprehensions of my own onto the film, but at the same time, I think it might be there to be found. And it spooked me much more than the flattened sheet already had.