

FINAL GOODBYE

‘Fellow Travelers’ Ends With More Hot Sex—and So Many Tears

‘Fellow Travelers’ Ends With One Last Great Sex Scene and So Many Tears

‘Fellow Travelers’ Recap: One Last Sex Scene and a Heartbreaking Death

The heartbreak events of the “Fellow Travelers” finale may have been inevitable, but the journey there is packed with shocking secrets and a powder keg of emotion.

In retrospect, it’s funny that I thought I’d be able to make it out of the *Fellow Travelers* series finale without a few tears. If I was moved enough to have a healthy cry during the premiere eight weeks ago, did I really think that I’d successfully hold back the waterworks when this epic love story reached its inevitable outcome? I am, after all, only human (despite the amount of microplastics I’ve consumed), and the bittersweet ending that *Fellow Travelers* built itself up to is an unquestionably mortal conclusion, one that details our unique capacity for ugliness and compassion in equal measure.

The finale jumps all over the series’ three-decade-long timeline, but thanks to the makeup team’s skilled prosthetic work, it’s an easy enough plot to follow—as long as you can keep track of a few wrinkles and liver spots. The episode begins with Hawk receiving a call from Lucy, who has flown to San Francisco to confront the husband she hasn’t heard from for days. As Tim’s illness has progressed, Hawk’s once fervent dedication to his family has fallen by the wayside. After spending nearly 30 years as a family man to cover up his true nature, the facade comes crashing down when Tim’s life is on the line. Lucy is merely giving Hawk the courtesy of something he never gave her: the truth. Their marriage is over.

Watching his lover die has renewed Hawk’s sense of urgency when it comes to getting Tim a meeting with the California governor. Time is running out to get the state government to care about an integral AIDS bill, and Hawk makes it his mission to use a lifetime of government service to pull some strings. A flashback reveals to us that this isn’t the first time Hawk has done something like this, the first being after he and Tim said their initial goodbyes when Tim joined the army. After Tim completed his service, Hawk recommended Tim for a spot in a government office working to bring Hungarian refugees into the country. The position would keep Tim close, and bring the two men right back to where they left off.

In the flashback, Hawk takes Tim to an old apartment in Washington D.C., which he and Lucy inherited. Hawk uses it as a sort of man cave, but never a place to take men. He calls himself “the picture of marital fidelity,” at least until Tim comes back into his life. *Fellow Travelers* couldn’t end without one last provocative sex scene—unless Showtime wanted a barrage of gay men in their social replies for the next five years—so naturally, we’re treated to a final roll in the hay. Hawk watches Tim intently, eventually telling him, “The Army made a man out of my Skippy.” Before I even had a chance to wonder if Hawk was about to get topped, my suspicions were confirmed. “I want you to fuck me,” he whispers to Tim.

Cut to a fully naked Matt Bomer and Jonathan Bailey, bumping uglies on a bare mattress on the floor of a near-empty apartment—a time-honored tradition and rite of passage for any gay man.

It's extremely hot, but it's also a defining moment in their relationship. Hawk has always equated sexual position to power, and by letting Tim be on top, he's relinquished the control he once demanded to exert. The next morning, Hawk kisses Tim goodbye and the both of them express excitement over being able to see each other every day when Tim gets his new job. That is, until Lucy notices a hickey that Tim left on Hawk's neck, and the dream of any kind of romantic normalcy is once again dashed.

We have known from the series' start that Hawk is not a good person. He's not even *Fellow Travelers'* swarthy anti-hero; this is a man who puts himself first at every turn, even at the detriment of those he loves. Caught in a bind once more, Hawk makes his most nefarious move of the entire series. Hawk reports Tim to the M-Unit, Senator McCarthy's former office dedicated to rooting out government perversion. Tim doesn't formally have the job that Hawk recommended him for, so there won't be an internal investigation into his affairs. Tim will, however, be permanently barred from government service for the rest of his life.

Tim finds out what Hawk has done through their old friend Mary. "You've become inconvenient," she tells Tim. When Tim tries to object, Mary confirms that Hawk is exactly the kind of man that he has always proven himself to be: a user. It's a stain on Hawk's conscience that remains well into the '80s, when Hawk is trying to sift through his stack of transgressions before Tim passes. His only option left to make good on a lifetime of regret is to get Tim in front of the California governor, a job far easier said than done.

But Hawk isn't without his connections, which he uses to at least get him and Tim into Governor Deukmejian's 1986 fundraising gala. It's a party packed with bigwigs, and Tim—freshly sprung from the hospital, unable to disguise a cane and lesions—is out of place. Hawk's friend in the governor's office, Dave (Tim Campbell), refuses to shake hands with Tim before telling him that their hopes are pointless; the governor is going to veto the AIDS bill. Hawk, finally through with seeing the man he loves being relegated to his disease, shakes Dave's hand and pulls him close. "Tim isn't Lucy's friend," Hawk whispers to him. "He's my friend. He just got out of the hospital. I was there the whole time, I climbed into his bed and held him."

Tim and Hawk excuse themselves for some air, and Hawk tries to admit that he was the reason Tim never got the job in the Hungarian refugee office, telling Tim that he thinks his presence in Tim's life caused nothing but hurt. But Tim stops him before he can get the words out. "I spent most of my life waiting for God to love me," Tim says. "And then I realized the only thing that matters is that I loved God. It's the same with you. I've never loved anyone but you. You were my great, consuming love. Most people don't get one of those. I do. I have no regrets."

It's a triumphant moment, filled with years upon years of emotions carefully crafted by the show's writers to hit the hardest in these final moments. That's also what makes it so difficult to accept that this is Hawk and Tim's last night together. The two men are, at last, honest with each other, unwilling to be deterred by the other person's feelings. But the time has come to part. It turns out that Tim finally got a one-up on Hawk, and used him for once. The gala

invitation was merely a way for Tim and Marcus to organize a sit-in protest to secure AIDS funding in a room full of donors with big pockets.

“I have to fight this fight,” Tim tells Hawk. “And that means letting go of everything else. If you’re around, I will not be able to let go.” Hawk interjects, saying that this is his moment to show up for Tim, but it’s too late. Tim has something bigger than Hawk to fight for now. It wouldn’t have been that way had Hawk not meddled in Tim’s job prospects when he returned home from the Army, but Hawk made their bed for them. He chose to keep them apart and forced their paths to diverge.

It’s a powerful scene, the one that *Fellow Travelers* has been working up to for eight weeks straight: a blistering testament to the life-altering power of honesty, and to being open and loving fully. Had Hawk been brave enough to be truthful with himself so many years prior, they may have never reached this point. Everything could have been different. And though Tim and Hawk still get some semblance of a beautiful ending, it may not have concluded with the two of them apart if Hawk had been courageous enough to have a heart as open as Tim’s.

A year later, Hawk walks along the AIDS memorial quilt at its first display on the National Mall. He passes Roy Cohn’s square, which is emblazoned with the words bully, coward, and victim. In this symbolic form, Cohn’s dastardly presence that had a hand in ruining so many lives is rightfully reduced to nothing but a feeble truth. As he continues to gaze at the quilt, Hawk finds Tim’s name and kneels, crying at his memory. His daughter Kimberly joins him, and tells him that it seems like a fitting tribute for her father’s friend. “He wasn’t my friend,” Hawk tells her. “He was the man I loved.”

It’s the start of something truly open and honest for Hawk, a new beginning after a life spent so long in hiding. In death, Tim saved his lover once more, as he had done so many times throughout their lives together, in ways big and small. Tim curbed Hawk’s drinking. He encouraged Hawk to get HIV tests and know his status. He helped Hawk grieve the death of his son. But above all, Tim convinced Hawk that love was a currency much more influential than secrets and lies. Just like he did at the end of the first episode, when he told Tim about his first love—something he had never told anyone before—Hawk let his guard down.