

# Fellowship & Fairydust



**A COLLECTION OF STORIES, ARTICLES,  
POETRY & ARTWORK**

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE MEMBERS OF  
FELLOWSHIP AND FAIRYDUST**







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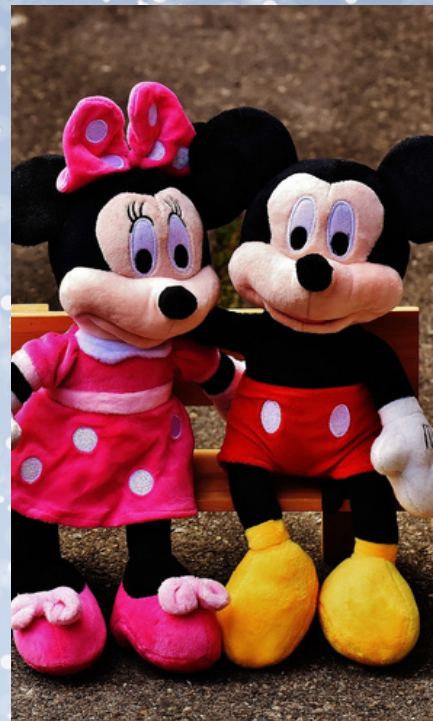
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# Editor's Note



*"How many lessons of faith and beauty we should lose, if there were no winter in our year!" ~Thomas Wentworth Higginson*

*It seems only yesterday that Autumn was just beginning to paint the leaves in vibrant shades of red and gold, and yet here we are once more entering Winter's chill embrace. Many people seem to associate winter only with darkness and bitter cold, but it's important to remember that they, too, have a vital role to play. Without the cold, many seeds and bulbs won't germinate, and without the long winter nights, nature would have no time to take a much-needed rest.*

*These are primal truths for humans too. For our ancestors, Winter was considered to be a time for rest and recuperation. The harvest was over, the stores were all full, and all that was left to do was to retreat to the welcome warmth of home and wait patiently for Spring to return, bringing the planting season in its wake. This reflective season enabled new stories to be spun around the hearthside, and new seeds of inspiration to be sown during the long nights. As spiritual beings, Winter is still a time for inner study and reflection; a perfect opportunity to reexamine the lessons of the year. It is only when the branches are bare and unadorned, that we can truly understand what lies beneath them, and this season helps to draw us into contemplative life. On the flip side, it is also a time when we reach out to others, as the holiday season brings family and friends together in joyous celebration. We remind ourselves, once more, that what is truly important in life, cannot be bought and paid for in any store - it requires no fancy packaging or colored ribbons.*

*Winter is a time to remember miracles. For Christians the world over, this is the time to call to mind the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ through the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas.*

*The story of the Nativity continues to affect people from all walks of life with its poignant imagery of sacredness in the heart of poverty – a baby born in a stable for animals and laid in a feeding trough because the world could not find "room" for Him.*







*It is a scene haunted by desperation and displacement, one that is reflected in the tragedies of our own day and age, yet it is one shot through with the presence of God-made-Flesh.*

*The Jewish people recall the story of the Maccabees and their deliverance from oppression during the season of Hanukkah, the festival of lights. It is this remembrance of the holy oil continuing to burn for eight days, that continues to light the winter's dark with the candles of the menorah.*

*For others, who draw inspiration from nature-based spirituality and ancestral traditions, the Winter Solstice is celebrated, marking the longest night of winter, and heralding the return of the sun's strength. There are many other celebrations throughout the world taking place during this special time.*

*Yes, Winter, with its many festive facets, is a truly a spiritually nourishing season, and one shot through with its own special kind of magic – in nature and in the heart.*

*As John Burroughs said of the season – "It is the life of the crystal, the architect of the flake, the fire of the frost, the soul of the sunbeam.*

*This crisp winter air is full of it."*

*And what could be more magical than to pair this Fellowship & Fairydust seasonal issue, with the fantastical and inspiring world of Disney! The collection of stories and articles contained within these pages pay homage to some of the myriad ways in which the Walt Disney Company (originally known as the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio) has reached out from the screen and touched people's lives, since it was first founded on October 16th 1923 by Walt and Roy Disney.*

*On behalf of the Fellowship & Fairydust family, we hope you enjoy this issue and wish you all a happy and blessed holiday season!*

**~ AVELLINA BALESTRI, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
& BETH AMOS, CONTENT EDITOR**





# Disney Lantern Poems

By The F&F Staff

## *A Lesson In Technicolour*

By Beth Amos

When young,  
I often dreamed  
of dashing princes, bold;  
castles and magic, daring quests,  
drawn from  
all of the stories Disney told.  
Imagination fuelled  
my waking play;  
vivid

Inspired  
by characters,  
so much larger than life.  
Good and evil, right and wrong, a  
vital  
lesson, in technicolour, shown;  
aiding me in real world  
struggle and strife.  
Teacher

Grown now,  
Disney remains  
stalwart companion,  
helping bring forth my inner child.  
Escape,  
for when the world turns cold or gets  
too hard to bear alone.  
The comfort of  
old friends

## *The Wait*

By Mike Flynn

So long,  
the waited date;  
It seems to take an age.  
A new exciting Disney film,  
released.

I go and watch with hope and faith,  
that fills my heart with joy.  
Doors open forth.  
Welcome.

I sit.  
The room is black.  
Anticipation grows.  
The curtains open and screen  
glows.  
The wait.  
Adverts show; my excitement  
builds,  
waiting for it to start.  
The rating now,  
not long.

Over.  
The adverts done,  
the movie starts to show.  
The wait, finished, the film is here.  
Heart leaps!  
Eyes glued in anticipation,  
I watch on, intently.  
Soak in the fun.  
Enjoy.

It ends.  
the credits roll,  
it did not disappoint.  
Another classic in the files.  
And now,  
the wait begins anew again,  
for the next great movie.  
It's worth the wait.  
Stunning.



By Hannah Skipper...

## *The Little Mermaid*



Mermaid.  
Evil Sea Witch.  
Twenty thingamabobs.  
Everything goes out of control.  
Payment.  
Sea animals to the rescue.  
Silent wedding.  
Humans.

## *The Lion King:*



Young Prince  
born on Pride Rock  
Scheming uncle; villain.  
Mufasa, stampede in the gorge.  
Banished.  
Simba grows up in exile.  
Reunite, love.  
Return.

## *Peter Pan*



A boy;  
a lost shadow.  
Last night, in the nursery,  
Peter Pan, Wendy, John, Michael,  
Tic Toc.  
Wendy gets set to walk the plank.  
Rescue, return,  
grown up.

## *Bambi*



New fawn.  
Wake up, wake up,  
the Great Prince has an heir!  
Nosy bunny, pretty Flower.  
A girl.  
Bambi and Feline forever.  
Love is a Song.  
Two fawns.

## *Mulan*



Short hair.  
Joins the Army;  
serves to save her father.  
Mushu and Cri-Kee will help her.  
Brave girl.  
Commanding officer is cute.  
To live or die.  
True love.

## *Pinocchio*



One wish.  
A wooden boy.  
You must go to school.  
You must let your conscience guide  
you.  
Trouble.  
A little boy with a long nose.  
Pleasure Island.  
Real boy.



# THE KING ARISING: A LION KING POEM

By *Avellina Balestri*

*There are roots in this land;  
The cradle of man,  
The pride of lions,  
The circle of life.*

*There are a thousand stories  
and a thousand dreams  
for those with eyes to see,  
and carve the signs in rock.*

*There are roots in this land;  
Of the cry of the hunter,  
Of the cry of the hunted,  
Of the turn of the circle.*

*There are a thousand journeys  
and a thousand songs  
for those with voice to sing.*

*There are roots in this land;  
Of chain upon the wrists,  
Of chain upon the ankles,  
Of rope around the neck.*

*There are a thousand sorrows  
and a thousand stones  
for those with hearts to remember.*

*There are roots in this land;  
The wild, and the true.*

*The ones that rise, though beaten.*

*The King arising within.*

*There are a thousand reflections  
and a thousand waters  
for those with faces to gaze.*



*There are roots in this land  
and names upon stones,  
foreign stones, for stolen sons.*

*There are a thousand carvings  
and a thousand tombs  
for those with souls to free.*

*There are roots in this land;  
The strength of the lion,*

*The speed of gazelle,  
The chase, and the chaser,  
and the one who escapes.*

*See the King arising  
from the mud and the rain.*

*See the King arising  
from the lash and chain.*

*Know the roots burn deep.*

*You are more than you've become.*

*Remember who you are.*

*Know he lives in you!*



# Ursula: A Villain In The Making

*By Mike Flynn*

"But father, I'm the eldest, why wouldn't I be next in line?" Ursula said in confusion, a lost look in her expression. "You may be my eldest child, but you are not fit to rule by Atlantican law. The law clearly states that the crown goes to the next eligible male," Poseidon explained patiently; sympathy clearly written on his face, which only made Ursula feel worse. She loved her father, but his steadfast regard for the law of Atlantica had always irritated her. Even as a young child, Ursula had felt different; she was wild and free, not staid and a stickler for the rules, like her father and brother.

"Triton is the next in line, by law. The people will accept only him, it's tradition."

"But it is so unfair father, I should be queen!"

"Ursula, daughter, I love you dearly, but tradition must be upheld. When I pass...."

"Father, don't say that!"

"When I pass, our people will need you both to be strong. The kingdom has to appear to be united so that we do not allow those who would exploit these weaknesses to use them to their advantage."

"But father...."

"THAT IS ENOUGH!!! The law is the law, and you would do well to remember that!"

Tears welling in her eyes, Ursula turned and swam away, the usually-vivid purple scales of her tail dimming to dark burgundy with her sadness. Ursula was a very rare mermaid, in that her scales changed colour in tune with her emotions – a rarity that only occurred every few hundred generations. Swimming until she could swim no more, Ursula looked around, finally taking in her surroundings, which until now she had not noticed. Fear gripped her heart as she realised that she had swum into the forbidden area, just outside of Atlantica – the Sea Witch's lair.

It had been many years since her father had defeated the old Sea Witch, but it was still forbidden for Atlanticans to





venture into her lands, for fear of any dangers that may still be lurking. At that moment, Ursula didn't care for rules; rules were the reason she was so miserable. "To the abyss with rules," Ursula thought, "who needs them!" Feeling her courage building in the face of her defiance, Ursula decided to swim down and explore a bit – after all, what danger could there be? The Sea Witch had been gone for years now. She approached the giant structure, feeling tendrils of fear and doubt sneaking in, as she passed below the giant bones of the once immense creature whose remains formed this great monument. Ursula had always been curious, not content to just accept things, as the rest of the denizens of Atlantica did. Venturing deeper into the building, she eventually came upon a large chamber that housed an array of items that Ursula had never seen before. In the centre, sat a large stone bowl that raised up from the ground, as if it had sprouted from it. To the side, there were shelves filled with books and unusual bottles, covered in algae from the passing of many years without being touched. Ursula could see that no one had been there in quite some time, and this somehow helped to ease her nerves a bit. Curiosity getting the better of her, Ursula pulled a book from the shelf and wiped away some of the algae. "Magical Origins," she read aloud. Unfastening the clasp, she slowly opened the book. All of a sudden, a bright light shone forth from the pages. Startled, she slammed the book shut and threw it

across the room, cowering to the side in fear.

A few moments passed, and Ursula calmed down, realising that she had not been harmed. However, it had left her shaken, and suddenly she didn't feel as safe as she had before; nervousness replacing her defiance and bravery. Swimming swiftly from the cave, she decided to return home and hopefully lose herself in the revelries of that night's celebrations; her earlier upset dissolving in the face of her unease. A party with her friends was just what she needed; however, she would not be telling anyone of today's adventure. They wouldn't understand, and it could get her into further trouble with her father. It was best kept a secret – her own little adventure and defiance.

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Several years later

It had been two days since her father had passed, and Ursula still couldn't believe it. It all felt like some horrible dream, and it had happened so fast. One moment he had been there – healthy and attending to matters of State. The next thing she knew, Ursula had been told that he was gravely ill. She had rushed to him, concern and worry overriding all else.

When she had finally arrived at his room, Triton was already there. Their father was lying in bed, pale as the underside of a ray, which made Ursula pause at the door in shock. As she stood there, trying to muster the courage to enter, she heard Triton and her father talking.

"Triton, for the sake of the kingdom, you



must. I am not long for this world, and when I pass, you must take your rightful place on the throne."

"But father, I cannot keep this from her, she has a right to know!"

"YOU MUST!!! I have spent years guiding you so that you can take the throne one day – I am just sorry that the day has arrived sooner than I expected. Ursula is not fit to rule; the Oracle was very clear on this. The Oracle prophesised that, should Ursula be given the crown, the seas will be at her mercy, and Atlantica will be in peril. This is why I changed the law all of those years ago to ensure that this never came to pass. I am sorry to burden you with this, my son, but you need to know how important it is that you take up the throne. Do not let your emotions cloud your decisions, as the very safety of this kingdom rests upon that."

"Yes, father, I understand. I just wish we didn't have to keep this from her."

"I know, my son, but you must! If Ursula were to learn of this, I fear what would come of it. Promise me that you will keep this secret and protect this kingdom, above all else!"

"I promise, father."

Heart pounding and tears welling in her eyes, Ursula had turned and fled, a flurry of emotions warring inside of her, and playing across her scales in a kaleidoscope of colours. How could her father have done this? Didn't he love and trust her? Why would he trust this Oracle over his own flesh and blood? Ursula wasn't evil; she had only ever wanted to rule so that she could make her father proud, and ensure that

Atlantica remained a prosperous and peaceful kingdom. Eventually, Ursula had calmed down and decided to confront her father on all of this, but she had been too late. Triton had admonished her for her absence – hurt and grief clear on his face, lacing his words with anger.

Gliding near the front of the funeral procession, Triton swam to Ursula's left, stoic and silent as they made their way towards the burial grounds. He hadn't spoken to her since that day, and Ursula had decided not to mention what she had overheard – if he wanted to be like that, then fine.

They arrived at the cave, entering into its expansive central cavern. The cavern was broken up only by the five large crystal columns that ran from the ground up to the ceiling of the cave – each one glowing with its own unique inner light. Within the centre of the cavern, lay a large crystal plinth which was connected through a network of channels to the massive columns. They interwove with each other as they spanned out from the plinth, like the nets which humans used to capture fish.

Her father's body was placed upon the plinth, and the ceremony began. The gathered merfolk started singing the customary song of sending, and, as Ursula joined in, she felt a mixture of sadness, confusion, and anger at the situation. She loved her father and missed him greatly, but he had lied to her all of her life – why would he do such a thing? As the song rose to its crescendo, the plinth began to glow



brighter and brighter, until finally a dazzling flash of light occurred; temporarily blinding Ursula. Blinking back the light, she looked ahead, and all that remained on the plinth were a few floating sparks of light – shimmering down onto its surface in a glistening sparkle, and dissipating within seconds of landing.

It was said that this ceremony returned the energy of those that had passed, back to the magic of the ocean – so that those that were lost were never truly gone.

Ceremony over, Ursula joined the procession as it left the cavern and returned to the city. Her brother remained silent on the journey back to Atlantica. Finally, though, Ursula could take the silence no longer; grief and anger warring inside of her.

“IS THIS HOW IT’S GOING TO BE?!” she yelled, in a burst of emotion.

“What?” Triton replied, looking confused.

“This! The silence and passive hostility!”

“What do you expect of me, Ursula? You couldn’t even be bothered to be with father when he was dying! Too busy swimming about in your own selfish world!”

“SELFISH!? SELFISH!!!!? I’ll tell you what is selfish! How about you and father plotting behind my back to keep the fact that I am the rightful heir to the throne from me! Treating me like an enemy, without even giving me a chance – all because of what? Some stupid, mad Oracle’s guesswork?!”

“You heard?” He sounded dismayed.

“Yes, I heard! I heard you promise father to deceive me! I heard him state that he

had changed the law and that he has lied to me all of these years, based on some madman’s ravings!”

“It’s not like that.” Triton sighed defeatedly.

“Oh, no? Well, tell me then, what is it like? Because I must be missing something. I don’t see how you both can trust some stranger over your own flesh and blood?!”

“You wouldn’t understand.”

“TRY ME! Or are you too much of a coward to admit that I’m right; and that you’ve both decided that I’m evil and not fit to rule – even though you know that I should be the rightful heir! All based on some stupid old Oracle that probably couldn’t predict the future if their fins depended upon it. Some stranger that has no business deciding my fate, or how I will act. You would believe them over me?! WHY?! AM I THAT MUCH OF A DISSAPOINTMENT...?”

“BECAUSE IT WAS MOTHER!” Triton blurted out, before covering his mouth in shock.

“What?” Ursula exclaimed, surprise deflating her anger in an instant.

“Father told me that the Oracle who predicted this... it was Mother.”

“It’s not true!” Ursula exclaimed, shaking her head in wide-eyed disbelief.

“It was the last prediction that she made before she died. Father made me promise not to tell you, as he didn’t want to upset you. It’s why he did what he did. He didn’t want to see you hurt, but he couldn’t ignore it either.”

“I don’t believe it!”

“It’s true Ursula,” her best friend Amalthia chimed in. “I was there when



your mother received the vision. Every word of it is true, and Poseidon made me swear not to tell you. I'm so sorry." "NOOOOOOOO...!" Ursula shrieked, turning and swimming away – unable to bear it anymore. Tears flooded her vision as she swam as fast as she could. She barely heard Triton and Amalthia calling after her as she swam, hurt and grief building inside of her. She just wanted to escape. Her whole life had been a lie. Everyone she cared about had lied to her for years. Even her own mother had condemned her when she was only two years old. She needed to get away from it all, she couldn't face anyone – she couldn't trust anyone either.

She kept swimming, trying to think of somewhere that she could go to escape. Suddenly, she remembered the perfect place. The Sea Witch's lair. It was perfect – no one would ever think to look for her there. It was forbidden to go there after all, but what did Ursula care? She would rather risk the dangers there, than return to the palace where she had been lied to and labelled as evil by her own flesh and blood.

It had been a couple of days since Ursula had run away, and she had not been bothered by anyone. She'd cleaned and tidied the room, deciding that if she was going to stay there, then she may as well make the most of it. The first night had been rough, due to the eerie stillness and the turbulent emotions she had swirling inside of her, but she had come to feel safe in the cavern as the night had passed by; nothing came here for fear of the place.

The absence of any living soul comforted Ursula, she wanted to be alone, after all, and once you got past the eerie stillness of the place, you could appreciate the calm and solitude that it had to offer.

She had even been brave enough to open the book again, the one that she had opened so many years before – still lying on the floor where she had thrown it. Steadying herself for the light that had shocked her the last time, she had found that it was simply magical illumination, not dissimilar to that possessed by the pillars in the burial ground's chamber.

She had read through the first few chapters, distracting herself from her thoughts, and learned that magic originated from the ocean itself and that it was an innate quality within her people. This had shocked Ursula, as she didn't recall any magical merfolk in history, other than, of course, the ruler of Atlantica; who could channel magic through the power of the trident. However, she had always thought that it was the trident itself that held the power and not the wielder.

As she read on, she discovered that the reason for this was that magic was a part of them and not something that they could control. As such, they couldn't access this magic without the use of a talisman such as the trident. However, she also remembered the stories of the Sea Witch, and how she too had been a mermaid.

She wondered how she had achieved her control over magic, without needing a talisman. Maybe, if Ursula could learn



to harness this power, she could prove to the kingdom that she was fit to be ruler of Atlantica – as she, alone, could harness magic without the use of a silly item. Maybe then, she would, at last, be accepted as the true and rightful heir. Finally, she found a passage in another tome that referred to the process of accessing this power. To Ursula's delight, the old Sea Witch had all of the ingredients in her collection of bottles and jars. The only thing that Ursula was a bit unsure of was the passage at the end, which stated that a price would need to be paid. It was vague, but hey, Ursula would happily pay it if it meant that she could finally get what she wanted.

Following the instructions, she added the ingredients to the large stone bowl in the centre of the room, careful to add just the right amounts. With each new ingredient, the contents changed colour, bubbling, and emitting a colourful cloud. At the last ingredient she paused, shock freezing her actions. She re-read the line again, horrified at what she had to add next – maybe this was the price the warning referred to; as in her opinion it was a very steep ask. Instead of a lock of hair, as she thought the spell had asked for, it was actually her entire length of luxurious purple hair.

She loved her long purple hair, almost as much as she loved her lovely purple tail. They were unique and what made Ursula who she was. This was a truly high cost. Would she really be willing to chop off her lovely locks to fuel the spell?

After a few paused moments of contemplative thought, Ursula decided that she could do this. After all, hair grows back, so it would only be temporary. Lifting a coral dagger from the shelf, she bundled up her luxurious mass of hair, and in one swift movement, cut through it all.

A single tear tracked down her cheek, mourning the loss of her prized mane before she strengthened her resolve and shook off her silly sentimentality over something so temporary.

Moving forward, she dropped her hair into the vessel and watched as it was swallowed up by the mixture – the colour changed, bleeding out to a vivid purple as if her hair were colouring the entire contents.

As it reached the edge, a cloud of purple started falling from the rim of the bowl, sinking to the floor and creeping towards her, growing in size. As it reached her, it started climbing higher and higher up her body, until she was completely bathed in the purple haze. She felt a tingling sensation all across her body, that started to get hotter and hotter until Ursula feared it would burn her.

Suddenly, she realised what was happening. She released a bloodcurdling scream as the spell took hold.

After all, she had read about the origins of magic and knew that mermaids were tied to their power. As such, the price was indeed high. As for being able to wield this innate magic for themselves, it turned out that the price was that she could no longer be a mermaid at all.



# Alice's Quandary

BY MIKE FLYNN



Door is closed, table there  
With a bottle sat upon it.  
The label reads drink me.

What should I do?  
I'm stuck.  
Which path to take?

The door is locked up tight.  
The rabbit far out of my reach.  
Too big to fit, so small.  
The door mocks me.  
Helps me?  
Tells me to drink.

Do I listen and drink?  
It smells sweet and not like poison.  
What harm could it be to?  
It hits my lips.  
Changing,  
I start shrinking.

Will this end, was I wrong?  
Stopping finally, I now fit.  
I pull the handle, locked.  
The door mocks me.  
Need key.  
On the table!

Frustration, didn't know.  
A box appears in front of me;  
biscuits labelled eat me.  
Do I dare to?  
Door nods.  
I take a bite.

I shoot up in the air,  
my body expanding - small space.  
Will this stop? What is this?  
Did I choose wrong?  
eat me?  
Was that not right?

It stops, I look around.  
The room so small, I fill it up.  
This must be a nightmare?  
Tears well, flowing.  
Can't stop.  
They fill the room.

In desperate haste, drink,  
I take another gulp, to shrink?  
Without a pause I fall.  
The drink works fast;  
drowning  
I kick for air.

The surface swells, I swim  
to stop myself from near drowning.  
A floating book, climb on,  
as tide rushes.  
Through door,  
the madness starts!





# Beauty Found Within

By Hannah Vincent

At exactly which moment are little girls first enthralled with Beauty and the Beast? Is it the iconic library, with its spiral staircases and book-lined floor, cathedral-sized ceiling, and bookshelves wrapped around the walls? Is it when Belle emerges on the top of the velvet-covered staircase in a flowing, butter-yellow dress, to the chords of “Tale as Old as Time”? Is it when she finally professes her love to the Beast, after he dies in her arms? It could be one moment, but it could also be a culmination of all of the moments within the film.

Beyond the visual and auditory feast, however, lies an all-important truth: the fact that beauty is found within someone and isn't only skin deep.

Too often, the world can consume innocent individuals, drawing them into the falsehood of believing that one should rely solely on appearances. Tabloids say, “eat this, drink that, and you will be the envy of all who see you.” They seem to insist that it's only exterior looks that matter, nothing else. We trust only as far as we can see – and for many, that is not very far.

We are quick to judge without knowing, and we are not merciful in allowing others to reveal their true identities. Despite Beauty and the Beast being a fairy tale, it contains the valuable lesson that so many of us forget – do not judge by appearances.

One of the many relatable parts of this beloved story is the character of Belle and her reaction to the Beast at the beginning of the story. Belle represents many of us – she fights for those she loves and finds joy in her everyday life. However, she also reflects humanity's tendency to condemn, simply based on exterior evidence. Granted, the Beast in the film does possess a dangerous temper, and he acts rashly towards those he mistrusts, so rightly Belle should be cautious and wary. And while, yes, if a hairy, 9-foot-tall creature locked up your family member in a cell, you would probably be angry and confused, it doesn't mean that





the story stops there. As the film progresses, Belle and the Beast have a series of encounters that slowly draws one closer to the other, opening their eyes to the goodness inside.

Even though the Beast frightens Belle with his temper, Belle decides to push past her initial fear and focus, instead, on the selfless act that the Beast displayed in defending her. After saving her from a pack of wolves, the Beast and Belle bond, resulting in a revelation of vulnerability. This vulnerability allows both to see underneath the skin into the heart. Belle, while independent and seemingly carefree, shows her intense love for her father, and her childlike wonder (and at times naiveté) at the world around her. For the Beast, he lives with the fact that although he is rich and titled, no one cares – a judgement solely based on his current appearance. Both have to be willing to let the other see into the weaknesses they work so hard to hide.

When we take time to dig deeper into a person's humanity, often we can be surprised. Each one of us has nuances, quirks, gifts, and talents that we can offer – it can be difficult to ignore a crusty exterior and see into the soft interior. Belle found this out after the Beast gifted her with the library, which was something that spoke to her soul. Both characters went out of their comfort zone to build their friendship and work past their differences. Over time, they both come to treasure the presence of each other, as well as the various ways that joy and happiness come into their lives. Even though the antagonist in the story threatens to rip them apart, Belle and the Beast fight for their discovered love and continually strive to honor one another in their actions.

Disney is infamous for happy endings, and *Beauty and the Beast* is no exception. Children are fascinated by the idea of 'happily ever after,' but many adults will mainly see the intrinsic value of seeing past first appearances, and focusing on the true values and humanity which each person owns. Not only is the story enchanting, but *Beauty and the Beast* carries a timeless lesson and a riveting paradox – even a beast can be loved. We are simply required to step outside of our first judgements and give people a chance. If we take the time to understand, interact, and work to create relationships and communities built on respect, our world would flourish.





# MAGIC MIRROR

*By Amanda Pizzolatto*

Elsa narrowed her eyes at the Duke of Weselton. He grinned sheepishly at her, as he unveiled a mirror. There were gasps throughout the hall. It was exquisite, standing at about seven feet tall with roses twining around the edges, a fairy-like figure at the top and another at the bottom, both staring at them with golden topaz eyes. Elsa rose and walked towards it.

"As a token of friendship, Your Highness, I present this one-of-a-kind mirror, a-a masterpiece!"

Elsa touched it gingerly. Her eyes nearly widened in shock, but she kept herself composed. There was a hint of magic about this mirror, and that made her curious. "I can see that," she said softly. "It is quite... interesting." She glanced at the Duke. "Where did you say you got this again?"

The Duke pulled slightly at his collar. "Well, um, one of my men found it being sold by one of those peddlers in the market. I don't think she knew the value of this...," he gulped as Elsa turned her eyes on him. "So, we, uh, gave her the proper compensation for its worth."

Elsa nodded slowly, not quite sure she trusted him. That last sentence was a little too ambiguous. "I see. That is good." She turned back to the mirror, tracing one of the iron-wrought roses with her fingers. She could still feel that little tinge of magic. "Very well, we will resume trade with Weselton...."

"Yes!"

"On one condition."

The Duke shot her a nervous grin. "Yes?"

"If I find out you've been speaking ill of Arendale or that you haven't kept up your side of the bargain, we will end the trade for good. Understand?"

The Duke nodded vigorously. "P-perfectly." He took a step back. "And, if you don't mind, Your Highness, I have other matters to attend to. I believe we are done here?"

Elsa nodded. "I believe we are done. Good luck on your other matters."

"Thank you. Let's go!" The Duke and his men nearly ran towards the doors. The guards opened them to let them out, and a fiery red fox ran in. The Duke's men tried to nab it, but it sidestepped them and ran straight towards the mirror. "Ah!" blurted the Duke.



"How did that varmint escape?" He rushed towards Elsa, as did Anna. The fox snarled at Elsa as it stood between her and the mirror. "My sincerest apologies, Your Highness! That fox has been chasing us ever since we left Weselton! I had my men capture it earlier, and I don't know how it escaped." He glared at his men. He turned back to Elsa. "I'll have my men take care of this."

Elsa shook her head. "Don't worry about it. Go take care of your matters. My men can handle this."

"Oh, but...."

Elsa snapped her fingers, and several soldiers surrounded her, Anna, and the mirror. "We have this. Good day, Duke."

"Right, uh, of course. Good day, Your Highness." The Duke bowed quickly and led his men out of the room.

Elsa turned to her men. "Take the mirror and the fox into one of the guest rooms. And have some food taken to the fox. I'll deal with them later."

The soldiers saluted her and went about carrying out her orders. The fox seemed surprised by her order and allowed the soldiers to carry her away without a fuss.

"Elsa, are you sure that's a good idea?" whispered Anna. "What if the mirror is enchanted?"

"Oh, it most certainly is, but I have royal duties to finish up before we can figure it out." Anna nodded as the two walked back to their seats.

Later that night, after they were sure they had no other duties to attend to, Elsa and Anna snuck up to the guest room where the mirror and the fox were. Anna held the candle while Elsa quietly unlocked the door. She pushed it open quietly, slightly, and the two peeked in. Their mouths dropped open. There was a man and a woman in the room, and the woman was wearing one of the dresses that was left in the closet in case someone needed it!

"Are you alright, Fox?" the man asked.

"I'm fine, Jacob," she said with a smile. "It's good to see you again."

"Yeah, good to see you too." He glanced around at the room. "But where are we? This isn't the ruins!"

Fox let out a soft snarl. "Some bozos found it and thought it would be a great gift for a queen they were trying to get back into the good graces of. I think she shouldn't trust them."

Elsa straightened up and walked in. "She doesn't."

The two looked at her in shock as she strode towards them. Anna walked in quickly behind her, smiling and waving sheepishly.

Fox gave a quick curtsy. "Your Majesty." Jacob gave a quick bow.

"Were you the fox?" asked Elsa.

"Yes," she whispered.

Anna's mouth dropped as she glanced between her sister and Fox. "What? You're the fox? But... but...!"

"Magic, of course," said Elsa.



Fox smirked. "Of course." She got down on the floor and reached under the bed, pulling out a fox fur. "This fur lets me change into a fox."

Anna touched the fur gingerly. "Wow," she pouted. "I liked the fox, though."

Elsa chuckled while Fox and Jacob smiled. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Elsa, Queen of Arendale, and this is my sister, Anna."

Anna waved. "Hi!"

"A pleasure to meet you, Your Highnesses," said Jacob with a bow. "I am Jacob Reckless, and this is Fox, whom you've apparently already met in her fox form."

"Yes, she made quite the entrance," said Elsa with a smile. "She didn't want to lose sight of that mirror."

Fox shifted her weight. "Well, of course not. Jacob was due back any day. Besides, I couldn't let them find out the secret of the mirror."

"So, care to explain exactly what it is?"

Jacob let out a breath as he turned to look at the mirror. "It, um, it's a portal to my world."

Anna and Elsa looked at him in shock. "Your world?" asked Elsa.

Jacob nodded, glancing at the sisters. "My world, it's a little different than yours, well, mainly because it's so advanced."

"Advanced in what way?" asked Elsa.

"A lot... it's kind of hard to explain."

Elsa sat down in a chair. "Well, start explaining, Mr. Reckless." Anna quickly sat down in the other chair.

Jacob glanced between the two. "I, uh, I'd rather not. If anybody found out that you know about these things, or the mirror, well, I know of some nasty characters who would really like to get their hands on it and get to my worlds to learn about the destructive tools that have been created." He sighed. "I just think it's best that only Fox and I know what lies on the other side of the mirror."

"Is there another reason?" asked Elsa.

Jacob bit his lip and glanced at Anna. "My family," he finally whispered, "I want to keep my family safe. My brother came through once, and I nearly lost him. I'd rather not have to go through that again."

Elsa glanced at Anna and nodded in understanding. "I nearly lost my sister, so I know the feeling all too well."

"So, you will not ask again about my world?"

"I won't, but I do want to know more about you both."

Jacob's eyes widened and glanced at Fox before glancing back at Elsa. "There's, um, there's a lot I shouldn't say about this world either. I've found a lot of secrets, secrets that I found out the hard way should have stayed quiet."

"You can tell me about yourself without revealing those secrets," said Elsa. "Come now; you are in my castle, I need to know."

Jacob and Fox hemmed and hawed about telling their stories. Elsa and Anna finally broke the ice by telling their story, along with a demonstration of Elsa's powers. That



convinced Fox to tell her story, of how ill her family treated her, how she got the magical fox fur, and how she met Jacob. Jacob, meanwhile, sat on the bed, wide-eyed, like he was still processing what he had just heard.

Anna slammed her hands down on the arms of the chair and rose, startling everyone.

“Alright, that does it!”

“Anna.”

“We are going to adopt you as our younger sister!”

Fox’s mouth dropped. “Say what?”

Elsa sighed. “Anna, she’s still older than you.”

“But I’m the princess, so I say she’s younger,” said Anna as she sat down next to Fox on the bed and wrapped her arms around her. Elsa laughed, and Fox chuckled as the tears began streaming down her face. Jacob cracked a smile before it fell from his face.

Fox looked at him as she wiped the tears from his eyes. “Should I tell them, or do you want to?”

Jacob opened his mouth and paused. Then the words began coming out, slowly. Elsa and Anna listened with enthusiastic rapture as he recounted his adventures since he first entered the mirror and were surprised and horrified in equal measure at the near misses, close calls, and at what happened to his brother. Seeing their interest, his words began tumbling out faster. It took him the rest of the night, but he told them everything up to this point. Fox verified a few details and corrected him on a few others, but for the most part, she stayed quiet. When Jacob was at last finished, there was a moment of stunned silence.

Elsa broke it. “I-it seems you and I are not that different.”

Jacob glanced at her. “Oh, I think we’re very different. Your Highness, it’s just, nearly losing our siblings that way... it leaves a mark on you.”

Elsa nodded. “It would.” She glanced at Anna. “It certainly made us even more protective of our family.”

Jacob glanced at Anna and the mirror as he nodded. “That it has.” He turned back to Elsa. “Now, you understand why this needs to be returned to the ruins, where it belongs.”

Elsa rose. “But after everything you just told me, and everything I just told you, you should understand why it should stay here.”

Jacob rose and faced her. “You do have impressive powers, but is it enough against fairies and elves?”

“I’m still learning how to fully use my powers, yes, but I’m already fairly good. Besides, would anyone really know that this is a mirror that can transport you to another world?”

“There are a few. As soon as they’ve found out that it’s been relocated here, they’ll be practically running to get over here and use it to their advantage. I also have to make sure no one from my world accidentally finds the mirror – we have a few bad ones of our own.”

“I see,” said Elsa, looking at the mirror. She looked at the window. “I think we should all



sleep on it. We will discuss this further once we've rested."

Jacob nodded, "I think that's a good idea."

"Come, I'll show you to your rooms." Elsa picked up the candle, while Anna yawned and walked out the door.

Fox quickly grabbed her fur before following Jacob and Elsa out into the corridor. Elsa turned the key in the lock before taking them down the hall. She made sure that Anna made it to her room safely and then showed Fox to her room.

Next was Jacob, who paused at the door and turned to the queen. "I, uh, I wanted to thank you for listening to my story. It, it's a relief to be able to share it after all of this time."

Elsa smiled, "that was just how it felt when I told you mine." She held out her hand. "I think we shall become good friends."

He shook her hand. "Yes, I think we shall."

"And, regardless of what we decide to do with the mirror, I hope that you will come to call Arendale your home away from home."

He tilted his head. "I don't know....," he began to smile, "...but it is quite tempting. I do hope it will be one for Fox. She's really never had much of a home to speak of."

Elsa nodded. "Of course. Well, goodnight."

"Goodnight, Your Majesty." Jacob bowed as Elsa walked away before turning in for the night.

[Duke of Weselton, Elsa, Anna, and Arendale are from Disney's Frozen. Jacob Reckless, Fox, and the mirror are from the Mirrorworld/Reckless series by Cornelia Funke]





# THE JUNGLE BOOK: A FOND REUNION

By A. A. Moss




Mowgli had lived in Mahajat – or the ‘man village’ as his animal friends had always called it – for a little over five years. Adopted by the Chieftain and his family, he had soon made great friends with their daughter, Chi.

It hadn't been an easy transition from his former life, living in the deep jungle; it had taken a long time to adjust to the ways of man. He'd never used tools before, nor bowls and cooking pots. He'd managed just fine living in the same way as his friend Baloo – with just the bare necessities of life.

In time, he'd learned, though, and these days he was quite skilled in the use of tools. The Chieftain had taken him aside on a number of occasions to tell him how impressed he was that Mowgli had become such a valued member of the tribe. He was a skilled fisherman and was confident when it came to taking care of the crops and domestic animals which the tribe kept. He would take the Chieftain's goats to fresh new grazing places every day, warming himself in the sunlight and pondering about what dinner might be, whilst still keeping an attentive ear to the sounds of the jungle; lest some opportunistic predator – who was especially partial to goat – happened to pass by.

Yes, the years had passed by gently. There had been a few members of the tribe who were a little hesitant at first to welcome the ‘wild boy’ into their midst, but most of them had made him feel welcome. The others, seeing the affection which their Chieftain held towards him, had been won over in time. He had gained so much of the Chieftain's trust, in fact, that these days, he also tended to his adoptive father's chickens and crops, as well as his prized goats. He would often bring treats back for





the flock in the form of the foraged fruits, nuts, and sweet, juicy tubers which he gathered while goat herding. In return for his consideration, the chickens provided his family with a plentiful supply of eggs, enough so that they could be exchanged with other tribal members for useful things like clay pots, a keen-edged, flint-bladed fishing knife, bone hooks or woven line. One time he had even received a beautiful woven basket to help him carry back his foraged finds. Truthfully, and despite his initial misgivings, he had found living amongst his own kind to be both peaceful and fulfilling. Unfortunately, this was all about to change.

On the morning in question, Mowgli had just finished feeding the chickens and checking the cornfield. He collected his lunch – safely secured in a clean piece of cloth courtesy of his new mother – and his full water-skin. She prepared his lunch every morning, and it never failed to bring a smile to his face. It was nice to be part of a family, and he already felt comfortable calling them ‘mom,’ ‘dad,’ and ‘sister,’ just as if he had spent his whole life living as part of the tribe. He had loved his animal family too, of course, but being with his own kind, he felt, more than ever before, as if he ‘belonged.’

He made his way over to the goat enclosure – a square space surrounded by cut and stacked thorn bushes – but, as he entered, he could feel that something just wasn’t right. He quickly checked the herd, once, twice, and a third time just to make sure that his eyes weren’t deceiving him – Arabella was missing! A white goat with long black ears, Arabella was usually the easiest one to spot in amongst the jostling herd. He quickly scanned the boundary line to see if he could locate where she had managed to get through. He couldn’t find any obvious weak points, but a little goat whose hide was as thick as her legs were strong, could still push their way through if they were determined enough.

Mowgli searched for over an hour but still could find no sign of his wayward charge. Heart sinking, he decided to take the rest of the flock out to graze, in the hopes that Arabella would hear them and find her way back to him. He refused to entertain the little voice, which told him that she may not be alive in order to hear them. Resolutely, he shoved it to the very back of his mind where he didn’t have to listen to it anymore. But, as the day wore on, Arabella didn’t hear them, and she didn’t find her way back to the flock.

At last, the sun began to descend across the sky. Glumly, Mowgli set the herd for home, and, after a short distance, he stumbled upon something that no goatherd ever wanted to find. Large animal tracks marked deep furrows into the path in front of him, unmistakably those of a large tiger, although none had been seen in the area for years – not since that last terrible encounter with Shere Khan. But it couldn’t be... could it? Shere Khan was miles away now. Surely, he wouldn’t dare return to the place of his ultimate defeat? One thing that Mowgli did know for sure was that he needed help. He hadn’t used his ability to speak with the animals for some time, but it wasn’t something he thought he’d ever likely forget. Taking a deep breath, he called out to the forest and then sat back to wait.



Before long, he heard noises in the undergrowth. Out into the clearing walked his old friends and mentors, Bagheera and Baloo.

"How goes it, Little Britches?" asked Baloo with a grin, while Bagheera just raised a questioning eyebrow. Mowgli ran over to greet his friends, throwing his arms around the neck of each of them in turn and hugging them tightly. He hadn't realised just how much he'd missed their company. For a few precious minutes, it was as if nothing had ever changed, as if he had never left his wild jungle home for the company of his own kind. He wanted to ask them all kinds of questions about what had been happening in his absence, but that would have to wait as the sun was dipping ever lower towards the canopy.

He stepped back, worry about Arabella reasserting itself at the forefront of his mind. "Is Shere Khan back?" he asked, feeling his heart tighten painfully, as Bagheera dropped his gaze to the ground rather than meeting his eyes.

"I'd heard rumours." He confirmed with a frown.

"Baggi! And you never even told me?!" Baloo exclaimed, shooting a disgruntled look at his friend.

"Well, they were only sketchy rumours at best. I wanted to be certain before raising the alarm and letting panic loose." Bagheera explained, patient as ever.

Baloo seemed a little mollified at that and scratched his head in thought for a moment before turning back to Mowgli. "What makes you ask, Little Britches? Have you heard rumours too?"

"No, but a little while ago, I came across tracks in the forest, and Arabella – the Chieftain's prized goat – is missing."

"We gotta do something, Baggi!" Baloo exclaimed, looking around as if he expected to see Shere Khan waiting to pounce on them from behind every tree.

"We'll call a 'council of the elders' and see what can be done." Bagheera agreed.

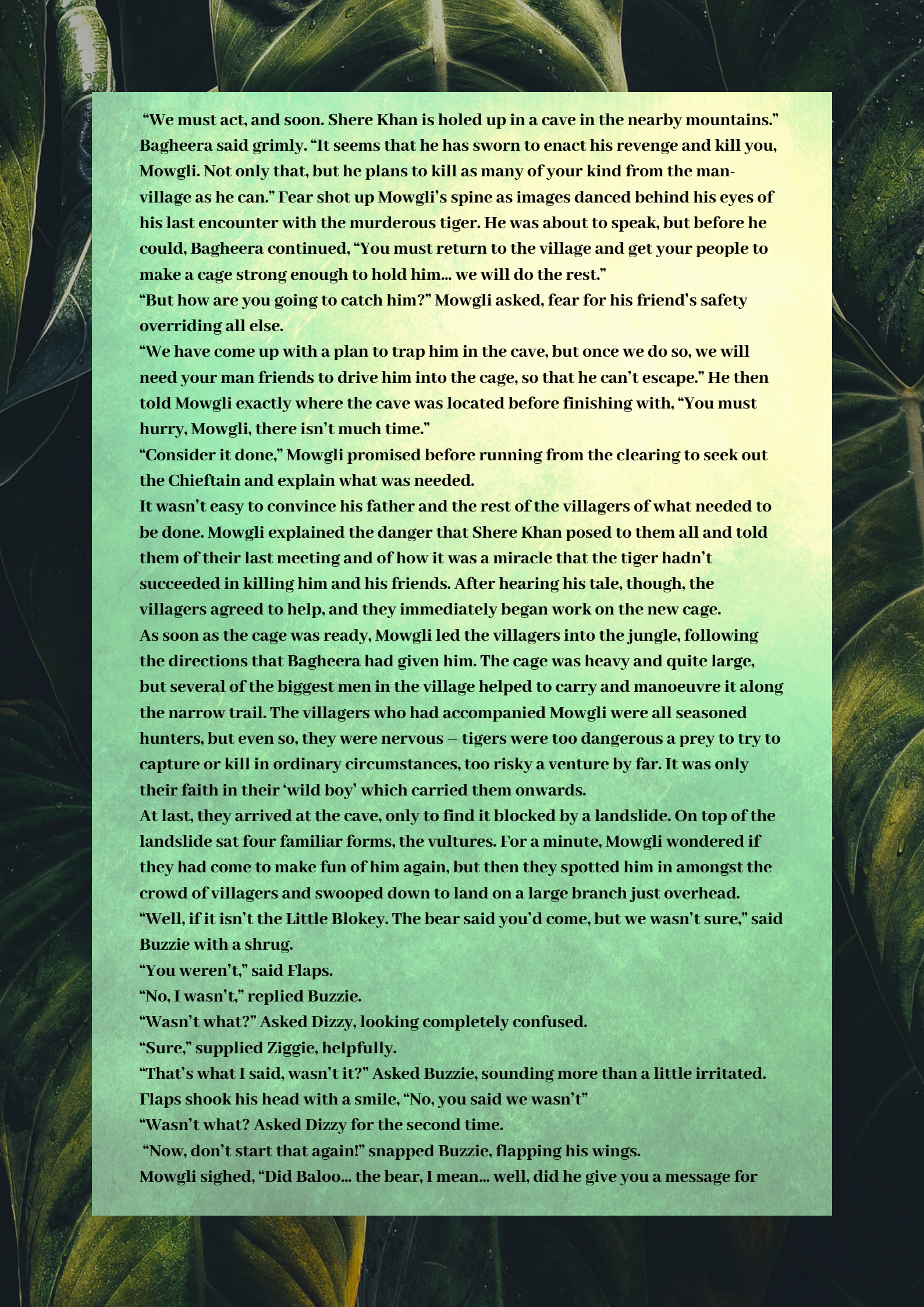
Mowgli thanked them both and watched as they melted back into the undergrowth before turning, once again, for the relative safety of home. Once back within the walls of the village, he let his flock back into their enclosure, lit the tallow lamp in its stone cradle, and settled down in a pile of dry grass to wait out the long night. He knew that the council of elders would meet by the light of the moon that night, but until he knew more about what was going on, and whether Shere Khan had, indeed, returned to their part of the jungle, there was no way that he was leaving his new father's herd unguarded.

At last, the sun crept back up above the treeline again, and Mowgli set about his chores, bleary-eyed from the long sleepless night. There was still no sign at all of Arabella, but at least all of the other goats were present and accounted for.

Chores done, at last, Mowgli sprinted back to the same clearing where he'd met his two friends the day before. He called out and, almost instantly, Bagheera and Baloo appeared from the bushes.

"Yo, Little Britches," Baloo said, his larger than life personality clearly undaunted "by the bad news which his serious-faced friend was about to impart.





"We must act, and soon. Shere Khan is holed up in a cave in the nearby mountains." Bagheera said grimly. "It seems that he has sworn to enact his revenge and kill you, Mowgli. Not only that, but he plans to kill as many of your kind from the man-village as he can." Fear shot up Mowgli's spine as images danced behind his eyes of his last encounter with the murderous tiger. He was about to speak, but before he could, Bagheera continued, "You must return to the village and get your people to make a cage strong enough to hold him... we will do the rest."

"But how are you going to catch him?" Mowgli asked, fear for his friend's safety overriding all else.

"We have come up with a plan to trap him in the cave, but once we do so, we will need your man friends to drive him into the cage, so that he can't escape." He then told Mowgli exactly where the cave was located before finishing with, "You must hurry, Mowgli, there isn't much time."

"Consider it done," Mowgli promised before running from the clearing to seek out the Chieftain and explain what was needed.

It wasn't easy to convince his father and the rest of the villagers of what needed to be done. Mowgli explained the danger that Shere Khan posed to them all and told them of their last meeting and of how it was a miracle that the tiger hadn't succeeded in killing him and his friends. After hearing his tale, though, the villagers agreed to help, and they immediately began work on the new cage.

As soon as the cage was ready, Mowgli led the villagers into the jungle, following the directions that Bagheera had given him. The cage was heavy and quite large, but several of the biggest men in the village helped to carry and manoeuvre it along the narrow trail. The villagers who had accompanied Mowgli were all seasoned hunters, but even so, they were nervous – tigers were too dangerous a prey to try to capture or kill in ordinary circumstances, too risky a venture by far. It was only their faith in their 'wild boy' which carried them onwards.

At last, they arrived at the cave, only to find it blocked by a landslide. On top of the landslide sat four familiar forms, the vultures. For a minute, Mowgli wondered if they had come to make fun of him again, but then they spotted him in amongst the crowd of villagers and swooped down to land on a large branch just overhead.

"Well, if it isn't the Little Blokey. The bear said you'd come, but we wasn't sure," said Buzzie with a shrug.

"You weren't," said Flaps.

"No, I wasn't," replied Buzzie.

"Wasn't what?" Asked Dizzy, looking completely confused.

"Sure," supplied Ziggie, helpfully.

"That's what I said, wasn't it?" Asked Buzzie, sounding more than a little irritated. Flaps shook his head with a smile, "No, you said we wasn't"

"Wasn't what? Asked Dizzy for the second time.

"Now, don't start that again!" snapped Buzzie, flapping his wings.

Mowgli sighed, "Did Baloo... the bear, I mean... well, did he give you a message for



me?”

“Well, he and the panther turned up, and they set to work on the slope above the cave, you see....” Buzzie began, only to be interrupted in his flow, once again, by Flaps.

“Well, it was mostly the burrowing animals, really,” he corrected.

“And the birds,” chimed in Dizzy.

“Oh yes, the birds definitely helped,” agreed Ziggy with a nod.

“Will you lot let a vulture get a word in edgewise???” Buzzie snapped.

“Edgeways,” corrected Flaps, earning himself and the other two an angry glare.

“Okay, okay... have it your way,” he huffed. He motioned to the other two, and they soared off, back up to the top of the cliff to watch the proceedings.

“You were saying?” Mowgli prompted Buzzie, who was still glaring in the direction that the other three had flown.

“Oh yeah... now, where was I?”

“They were digging away at the slope above the cave....”

“That’s right! And when they had dug away a fair amount, loosening it up like, the elephant....”

“You mean Colonel Hathi?” Asked Mowgli, rather surprised that the Colonel would take time out of his drill training to help them.

“Yep, that’s the one. Well, he came on through – stomp-ity-stomping, as he does – and sent the whole blasted lot tumbling down over the entrance of the cave.”

“That’s brilliant!” Mowgli said, grinning at his friend’s ingenuity.

“Sure, sure. So, the bear said that all that’s left is for you to dig the tiger out and get him into that there cage.”

“That’s great. Thank you, Buzzie. I really appreciate you helping out like this.” Mowgli said.

“No problem at all, Little Blokey. We had nothin better to do anyway.” With that, the vulture flew off to join his companions once again, and Mowgli told the rest of the men what he’d been told.

The villagers dug away at the scree until they had made a small opening in the debris – not large enough for a tiger to come through, but big enough to get the cage into place. Once the cage was secured and the door levered open, the men set back to digging, widening the hole bit by bit.

Suddenly a loud “ROARRRR!” sounded from within the cave, and a giant shape hurtled from the darkness and straight into the waiting cage. Yellow and black, with a fire-scarred tail, Shere Khan, the great tiger, was captured!

The Chieftain decreed that the tiger be transported to a far distant nature reserve, where he would live out his days and be prevented from harming anyone ever again. The village, Mowgli, and all of the jungle animals were now safe again.

Knowing that the animals had, once again, helped to rid the jungle of Shere Khan, the villagers were happy to settle back into a harmonious co-existence with those that inhabited the same jungle that they did.



A few days later, early one morning, Mowgli was preparing to take the goats back out to graze again. He felt much safer now, knowing that Shere Khan was never coming back again. As he led the goats from the enclosure and into the jungle, he suddenly heard a rustling, and a soft whisper reached his ears.

"Pssst. Mowgli," a voice whispered from within the dense foliage at the side of the trail.

Mowgli recognized the voice immediately. "Is that you, Baloo?" He asked, already knowing the answer to his question. Sure enough, moments later, Baloo emerged from the bushes.

"Hey, Baloo!" Mowgli hugged his friend again.

"Hey, yourself, Little Britches," Baloo grinned. Pulling a rope from behind his back, he handed it to Mowgli.

Following the line of the rope, Mowgli was met with the familiar white face and black ears of Arabella.

"Arabella!" Mowgli cried. He had never expected to see the little goat again. He ran forward and hugged her, much to the little goat's surprise and confusion.

"I found her wandering and lost in the deep forest. She didn't know the way back." With a wink, Baloo turned to leave again.

"Wait, Baloo," Mowgli called.

Baloo turned and looked back at his friend.

"Let's not leave it so long before we speak again this time, okay?"

"Sure thing, Little Britches," Baloo grinned broadly.

"I'd like to be a part of both of my families from here on out."

"That sounds like a very sensible plan." He turned and walked off into the jungle again, whistling a very familiar tune.





# TRUE LOVE: CLASSIC DISNEY VS. STUDIO GHIBLI

By Sarah Levesque



I'm just going to come out and say it... I think that, on the whole, Ghibli Studios has a better understanding of true love than classic Disney. Most of the classic Disney movies have this idea that true love is when you find Mr. or Mrs. Right - often falling in love instantly - and living happily ever after. Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, Enchanted, and who knows how many other classic Disney movies fit this mold.

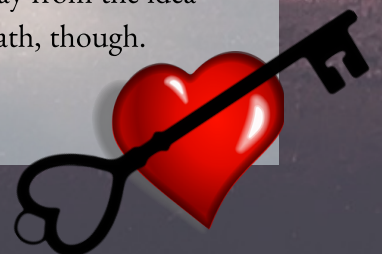
Now I know what some of you are thinking: What do you think true love is if not romantic love that lasts forever? Well, I believe true love is consistently putting another person before yourself, accepting their weaknesses and strengths, and holding them up to a high-but-realistic standard – as Christ did. Over and over again we see him putting people before himself, as he taught and healed when tired and hungry. Over and over again he accepted people as they were. He forgave their sins and encouraged them to overcome their failures, to be better, to become more. “Go and sin no more.” High expectations, indeed. And of course, he died for the sins of all mankind; that we may have the chance to be with him in eternity. If you confine true love to romantic love, Christ – the epitome of love Himself – is discounted.

On the other hand, Studio Ghibli (whose distribution rights have been owned by Disney since 1996), portrays true love as selfless love between any two characters. This is pointed out directly in Ponyo and in Howl's Moving Castle, but it is also alluded to in many other Ghibli films – where siblings or friends often go to great lengths to help each other, sacrificing their wants, needs, and safety for each other.

This is not to say that no Disney movies have these characteristics. Many classic Disney movies depict family and friends helping each other. Some, like Beauty and the Beast, have characters holding each other up to a higher standard. Some even show characters sacrificing themselves for others – such as Mulan and Belle sacrificing themselves for their fathers, or King Triton sacrificing himself for Ariel. But these movies still don't call this true love, portraying that as strictly romantic.

The exceptions that I have seen to this tendency are Frozen and Brave, both of which did an excellent job of portraying familial love as true love. These movies meet the same standard as the Ghibli movies in this respect. Let me say again that many classic Disney movies contain scenes of true love between various characters, but the movies don't imply that this love is also 'true' in the way Ghibli Studios, Frozen, and Brave do.

I haven't seen every Disney movie, and there may be more examples from classic Disney, but I'm hoping these two Disney princess movies are the beginnings of a shift away from the idea that love must be romantic in order to be true. I'm not going to hold my breath, though.





# My Heart is Frozen: What Frozen Means to Me

BY MEAGAN MCKINSTRY

It's just about the time of year when Christmas music becomes ubiquitous, to the joy of some and the chagrin of others. Whether one finds that Christmas tunes in public places contribute to the holiday spirit or irritates them to no end, it's hard to deny that Christmas music in December is all but inescapable. Almost exactly six years ago, a new winter song came out – not technically a holiday song, but a song released in late November that exploded in popularity and became so pervasive that it might as well have



been a Christmas song. I don't know exactly how prevalent it became (Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You" certainly sets a high standard for omnipresence of holiday music!), but I'm sure there were lots of parents practically tearing their hair out as their kids played this song for the umpteenth time in a row. Even among childless people of my age (I was 20 at the time), I seem to remember folks rolling their eyes and saying something along the lines of "Ugh, that song?" The song that I'm talking about, of course, is "Let It Go", and the movie from which it comes is Frozen.

Many people seem to think Frozen is overrated, and I can understand that. I often hear complaints that Frozen receives hype that is more deserved by films such as Moana or Coco – which is almost certainly true. Those movies have cultural significance that Frozen does not. But while I absolutely, wholeheartedly support showering Moana and Coco (and other Disney movies that increase representation in family-oriented films) with praise, it's hard for me to relate to the idea that Frozen is overrated. This is because, to me personally, Frozen is a very meaningful film.

There are many reasons why Frozen is special to me, but two stand out. The first is my connection to the character of Elsa. I absolutely love Elsa. Love, love, love her. I'm 26 now, and just recently I got so excited by an Elsa balloon in a grocery store that I had my father take a picture of me with it! I know that most people probably consider me "too old" to have such an affinity for a Disney character, but too bad.

The reason I love Elsa so much is that I both relate to her timidity at the beginning and admire her personal growth throughout the film. I am a person who has many fears, many of which relate to how others see me and evaluate my worth – if I'm "the good girl [I] always have to be," then maybe people will accept me. Elsa starts out the same way at the beginning of the movie. Because I see those similarities between us, I automatically feel drawn to her.



However, whereas many of my fears still bind me, Elsa found freedom, and I look up to her for that. I don't know how to "let it go," really, but Elsa represents the possibility of overcoming my fears. She also gets to a point by the conclusion of the film where she isn't afraid to be herself, and that's inspiring to me because I would love to be able to be myself without worrying about what everyone thinks about me. (I generally am "myself," but I don't yet have the same self-assurance that Elsa finds by the story's end.) In summary, I feel a strong connection to Elsa, and I gain hope and inspiration from her inner journey.

The second reason I love Frozen is that it's about a relationship between sisters. I myself have only one biological sibling – a sister, whom I love dearly. Although we are quite different, we generally got along pretty well when we were growing up. We grew much closer, though, around the time that Frozen came out. That's purely coincidental – the movie's release happened at a time when our family was undergoing many changes, plus both my sister and I were in the midst of the huge transition that is moving away from home to attend college. But I think the growing importance of my sister to me at the time the film came out is why the story is so meaningful to me.

In Frozen, the sister-sister relationship between Anna and Elsa permeates the plot. Among other things, Anna goes to great lengths to find Elsa when she goes missing, Elsa unintentionally harms Anna, and Anna throws herself in the path of a sword to save Elsa. I relate to each of these actions. Thankfully, my sister has never gone missing, but I would be desperate to find her if she did. Also, like Elsa, I have accidentally caused my sister pain at times. While it's hard to say what would happen in the moment, my love for my sister is such that I could see myself sacrificing my safety for her. In short, the interactions between Anna and Elsa remind me of my relationship with my own sister, a relationship that was particularly salient to me at the time of the film's release.

So, that's why I hold Frozen so close to my heart: I relate very strongly both to Elsa and to the relationship between the two sisters. In some ways, I guess you could say these aspects of the film go to the core of my identity. My fears are longstanding and deep-seated, to the point where I consider fear to be one of my primary characteristics. At the same time, it's not fun living with so much fear. A central desire of mine – but one that I'm ironically too afraid to act upon – is to overcome my fear. Likewise, my relationship with my sister is one of the most important relationships in my life. Therefore, Frozen portrays a character with whom I strongly identify, within a sibling relationship that highly reminds me of my own. It almost feels like the movie was made for me. I'm not so vain as to believe that's true, nor am I vain enough to think that everyone else should like Frozen just because I do, but I hope I have effectively communicated why the film is special to me.

Maybe I'm an adult. And maybe people will judge me for loving a children's movie, particularly as I continue to age, but I can't bring myself to care. Frozen makes me happy, and while I may worry about what people think of me in many other contexts, this is not going to be one of them. Perhaps I've taken a lesson from Elsa, after all.



# Dead Men Tell No Tales

A Movie Review By Isabella Summitt



*A Rehash of things that have been done before and/or better in no particular order:*

1. *A pirate boy has a quest to free his father from a curse – Dead Man's Chest*  
*Admittedly, I felt sorrier for Will than for his father, Bootstrap, knowing that he has Elizabeth waiting for him, but it is a repeat of Dead Man's Chest where Will was trying to free his father from the Flying Dutchman. Most of the sympathy, from me at least, came from the beautiful music.*
2. *A Pirate has a vendetta against Jack Sparrow – Dead Man's Chest*  
*Seriously? Why is everyone out to get this pirate? Can't we have an adventure where Jack is just on the sidelines watching this all unfold like we did in the beginning? He's funny enough just reacting to the main storyline.*
3. *The movie opens with Jack's antics – Dead Man's Chest, On Stranger Tides*  
*As funny as it is, we've seen this before. The opening antics had nothing to do with the later story and go on for too long, as did the island of cannibals and the chase around London before.*
4. *The movie ends with a father's sacrifice and a long lingering shot of his face – On Stranger Tides*  
*I really think they stretched things a bit far with Barbossa in this. I felt more for Angelica and Blackbeard. Angelica was certainly more likeable than this uber-feminist.*
5. *Cursed, undead pirates – Curse of the Black Pearl, Dead Man's Chest, At World's End.*  
*SEEN IT! Every single Pirates of the Caribbean film has them; Curse of the Black Pearl, Barbossa and his crew, Dead Man's Chest & At World's End, Davy Jones' crew. The only one that didn't was On Stranger Tides, and I think the movie was all the better for it.*
6. *The presence of a throwaway bad guy British naval officer – All of the movies.*  
*Why David Wenham? They could have any actor in this unlikable throwaway part. He's just a one-dimensional version of Beckett from the last two films. Even the Spanish captain trying to destroy the fountain of youth had more depth.*
7. *A discount enchantress/upcoming Mummy travesty/Hela voodoo witch – Dead Man's Chest*  
*Seriously, where did she come from? Tia Dalma looked so much more convincing.*
8. *A main pirate bad guy with too much CGI – Dead Man's Chest*  
*SEEN IT! There's really no difference between Davy Jones and this Captain Salazar except for Salazar's pretense of moral superiority. They both have CGI fish monsters too.*



9. Gibbs as the backup plan guy – all of the movies. His rank should be first 'plot convenience' mate.

10. An aging, rock-star legend featuring as one of Jack's relatives – *At World's End*, *On Stranger Tides*. Not really a complaint but something that's been done before.

11. Jungle net trap – *Dead Man's Chest*  
Just tired of that old thing.

12. Falling into a pigsty.  
Yuck. Too many times.

13. The hunt for a mythological artifact to give one power over the sea – *Dead Man's Chest*, *On Stranger Tides*. The McGuffin. If it's not the gold coins, the heart of Davy Jones or the pieces of eight, it's the fountain of youth or the trident of Poseidon.

14. Jack Sparrow tied to a wooden thing, making funny faces as it gets thrown around.  
Two instances of this were in *Dead Man's chest*, and that was enough.

Complaints:

CGI young Johnny Depp

Seen it too much recently. Soon they'll be replacing real actors with puppets. They've done this with Robert Downey Jr. in *Civil War* and Kurt Russel in *Guardians of the Galaxy 2*. I imagine they'll soon be remaking *Edward Scissorhands* this way.





# The Enigma of Elsa

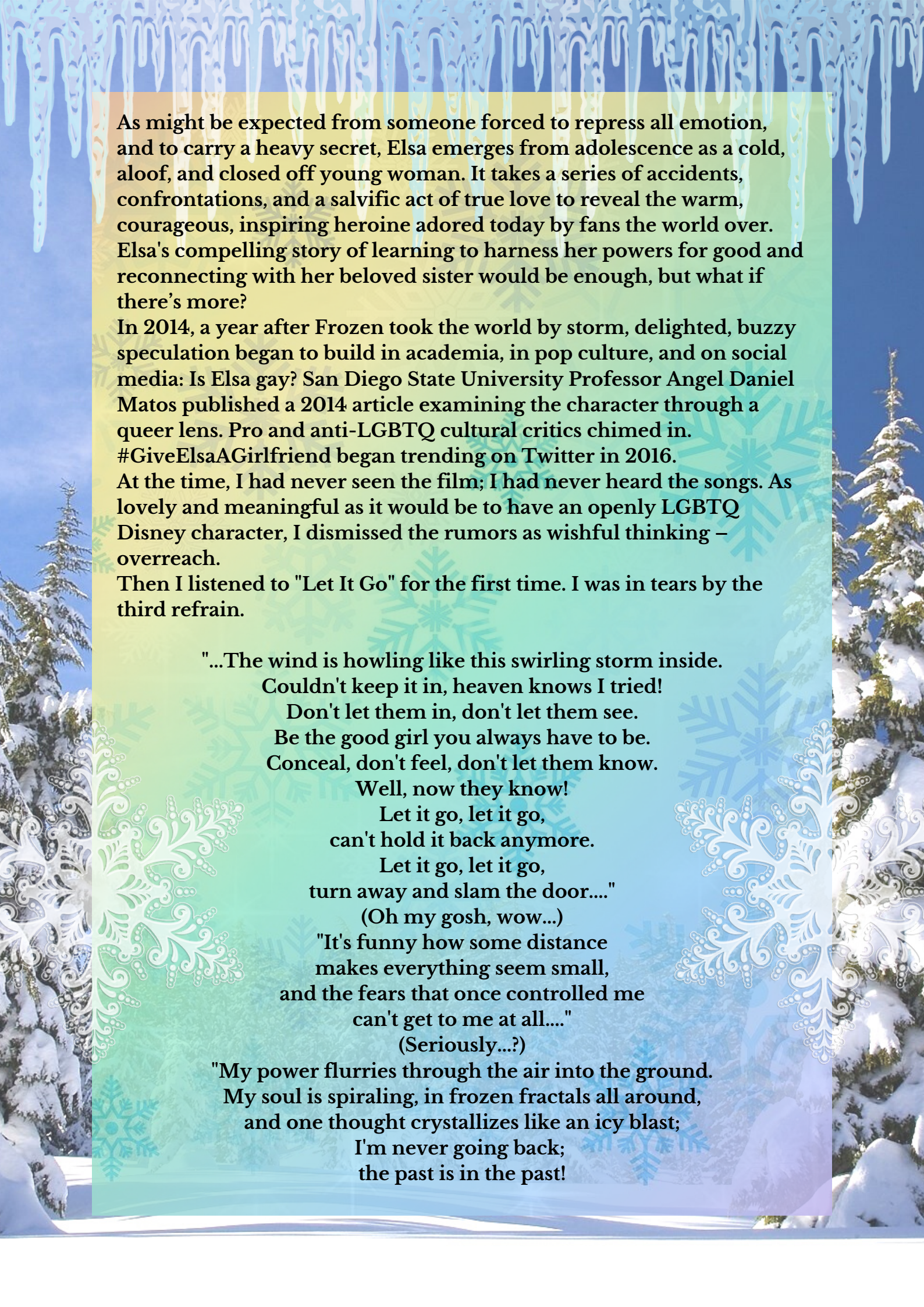
## By Violet James

Temperatures are dropping, the season's first snows are falling, and the long-awaited sequel to Frozen has swept into theaters like an icy blast. As we settle in for winter, let's examine the woman at the center of the storm. She's been a heartless, mystical Queen, a loving, misunderstood sister, a beloved global sensation, and yes, a gay icon, and through it all, Elsa remains an enigma.

The titular character of Hans Christian Anderson's *The Snow Queen* (fittingly published on the Winter Solstice in 1844) bears little resemblance to Disney's Elsa. A mesmerizing, manipulative figure who reigns over the "snow bees," she lures an isolated young boy to her magical sleigh, enchants him, and imprisons him far away in her snowy palace. Later adaptations depict an even more malevolent ruler, elevating her to full villain status in some stories. This mysterious woman had long captivated the imagination of Walt Disney and other filmmakers, but no one could quite figure out what to do with her until writers/directors Jennifer Lee, and Chris Buck reimagined the fearsome Snow Queen as a lonely, tragically misunderstood sister, struggling to embrace her power, while protecting her loved ones.

We first meet Elsa as a happy, carefree kid, born with the unique and seemingly charming ability to conjure snow and ice. She is confident, kind, and devoted to her little sister Anna, but their world is shattered when Elsa accidentally hurts her sister with her powers. Anna recovers, but all knowledge of her sister's abilities is wiped from her memory, and their parents resolve to keep Elsa's power a secret. The girl is locked away in her room for years, to protect herself and others from any more accidents. Elsa grows up feeling guilty, ashamed, fearful – and, above all, lonely. She is locked in an internal struggle against her own nature. She is betrayed and isolated by her feelings, which she must vigilantly monitor and conceal, as strong emotions unleash her powers. Sadness could produce sleet; fear can provoke a flurry; anger might conjure a blizzard.





As might be expected from someone forced to repress all emotion, and to carry a heavy secret, Elsa emerges from adolescence as a cold, aloof, and closed off young woman. It takes a series of accidents, confrontations, and a salvific act of true love to reveal the warm, courageous, inspiring heroine adored today by fans the world over. Elsa's compelling story of learning to harness her powers for good and reconnecting with her beloved sister would be enough, but what if there's more?

In 2014, a year after *Frozen* took the world by storm, delighted, buzzy speculation began to build in academia, in pop culture, and on social media: Is Elsa gay? San Diego State University Professor Angel Daniel Matos published a 2014 article examining the character through a queer lens. Pro and anti-LGBTQ cultural critics chimed in.

#GiveElsaAGirlfriend began trending on Twitter in 2016.

At the time, I had never seen the film; I had never heard the songs. As lovely and meaningful as it would be to have an openly LGBTQ Disney character, I dismissed the rumors as wishful thinking – overreach.

Then I listened to "Let It Go" for the first time. I was in tears by the third refrain.

"...The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside.

Couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I tried!

Don't let them in, don't let them see.

Be the good girl you always have to be.

Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know.

Well, now they know!

Let it go, let it go,  
can't hold it back anymore.

Let it go, let it go,  
turn away and slam the door...."

(Oh my gosh, wow...)

"It's funny how some distance  
makes everything seem small,  
and the fears that once controlled me  
can't get to me at all...."

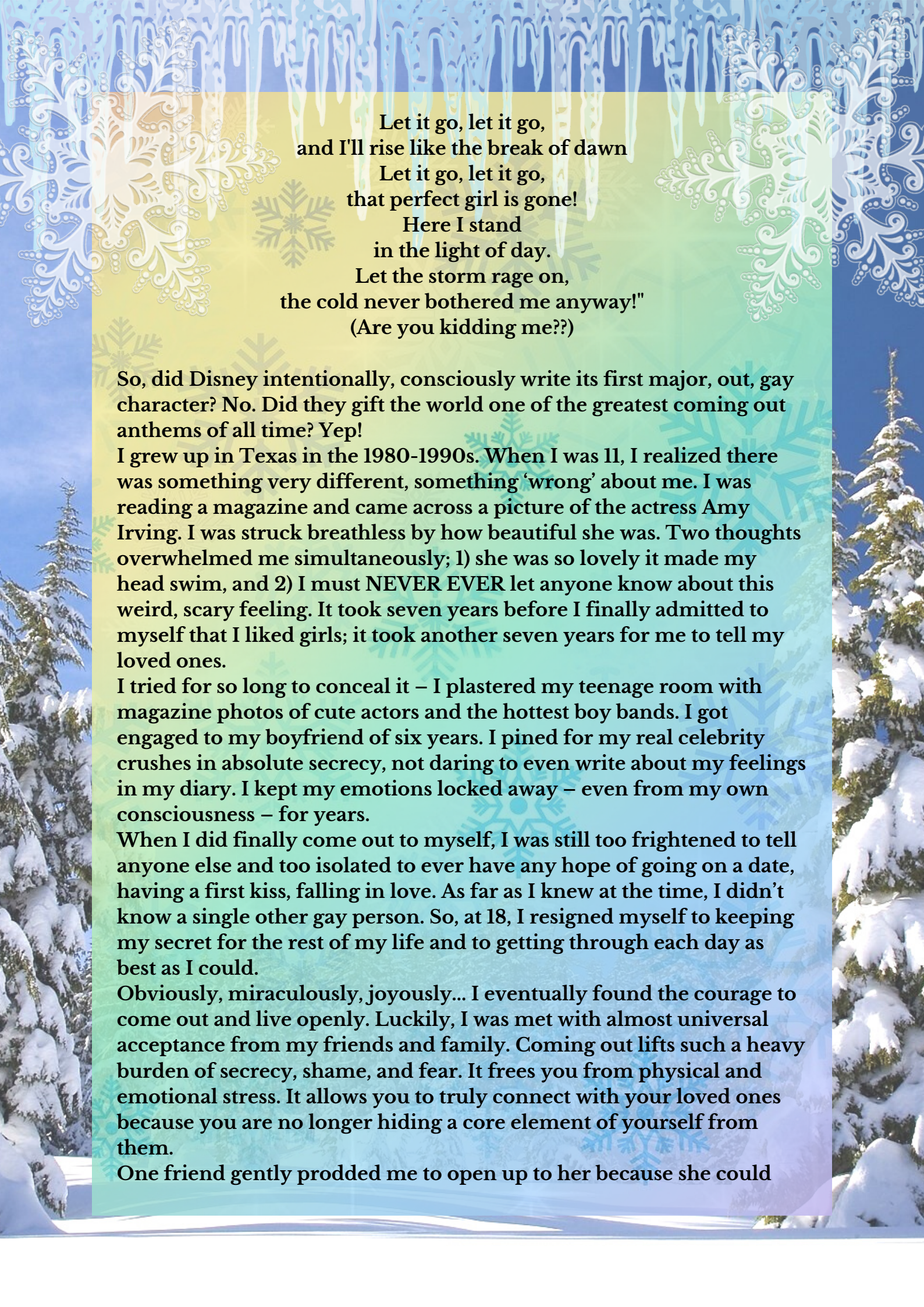
(Seriously...?)

"My power flurries through the air into the ground.

My soul is spiraling, in frozen fractals all around,  
and one thought crystallizes like an icy blast;

I'm never going back;  
the past is in the past!





Let it go, let it go,  
and I'll rise like the break of dawn  
Let it go, let it go,  
that perfect girl is gone!  
Here I stand  
in the light of day.  
Let the storm rage on,  
the cold never bothered me anyway!"  
(Are you kidding me??)

So, did Disney intentionally, consciously write its first major, out, gay character? No. Did they gift the world one of the greatest coming out anthems of all time? Yep!

I grew up in Texas in the 1980-1990s. When I was 11, I realized there was something very different, something 'wrong' about me. I was reading a magazine and came across a picture of the actress Amy Irving. I was struck breathless by how beautiful she was. Two thoughts overwhelmed me simultaneously; 1) she was so lovely it made my head swim, and 2) I must NEVER EVER let anyone know about this weird, scary feeling. It took seven years before I finally admitted to myself that I liked girls; it took another seven years for me to tell my loved ones.

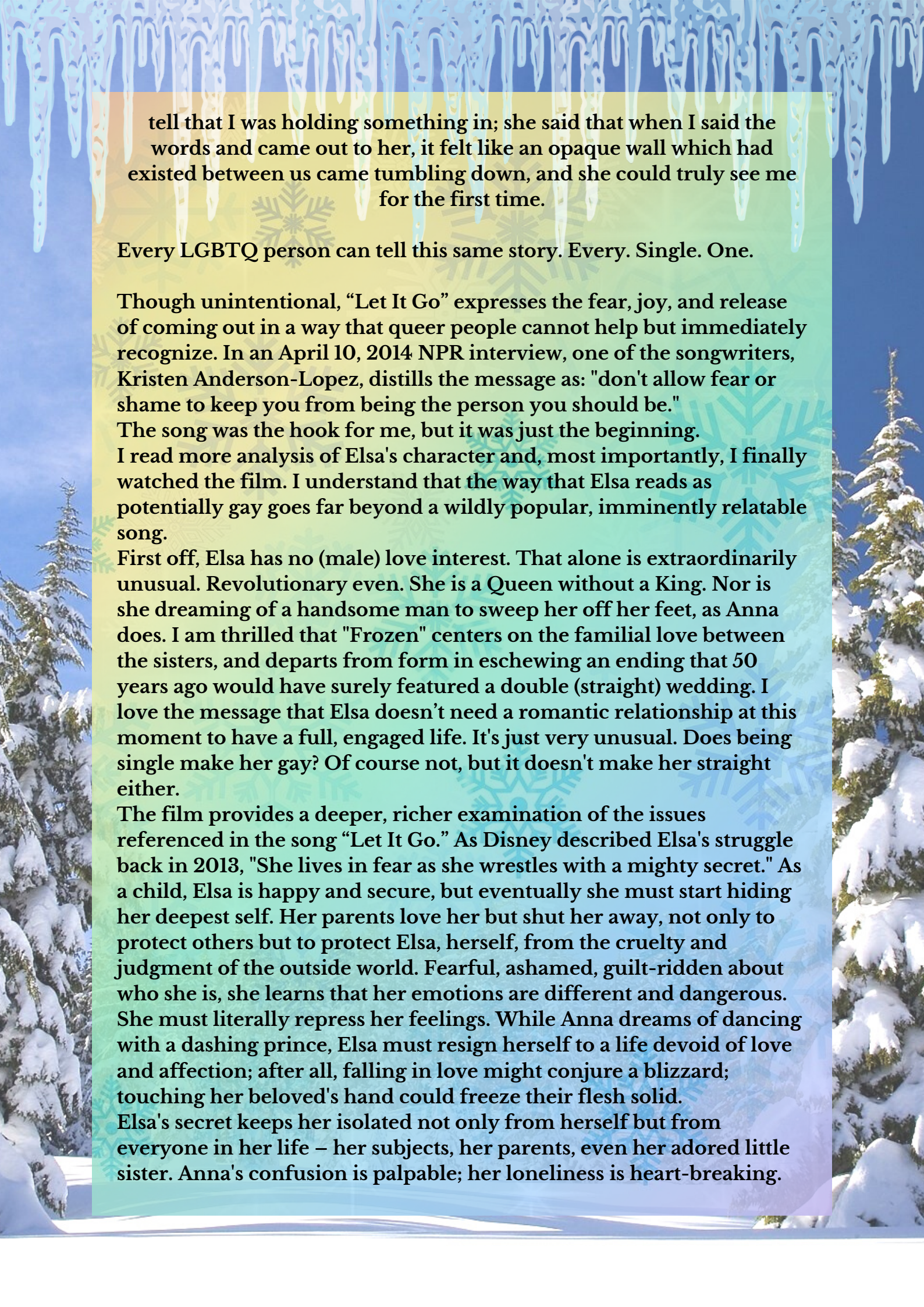
I tried for so long to conceal it – I plastered my teenage room with magazine photos of cute actors and the hottest boy bands. I got engaged to my boyfriend of six years. I pined for my real celebrity crushes in absolute secrecy, not daring to even write about my feelings in my diary. I kept my emotions locked away – even from my own consciousness – for years.

When I did finally come out to myself, I was still too frightened to tell anyone else and too isolated to ever have any hope of going on a date, having a first kiss, falling in love. As far as I knew at the time, I didn't know a single other gay person. So, at 18, I resigned myself to keeping my secret for the rest of my life and to getting through each day as best as I could.

Obviously, miraculously, joyously... I eventually found the courage to come out and live openly. Luckily, I was met with almost universal acceptance from my friends and family. Coming out lifts such a heavy burden of secrecy, shame, and fear. It frees you from physical and emotional stress. It allows you to truly connect with your loved ones because you are no longer hiding a core element of yourself from them.

One friend gently prodded me to open up to her because she could





tell that I was holding something in; she said that when I said the words and came out to her, it felt like an opaque wall which had existed between us came tumbling down, and she could truly see me for the first time.

Every LGBTQ person can tell this same story. Every. Single. One.

Though unintentional, "Let It Go" expresses the fear, joy, and release of coming out in a way that queer people cannot help but immediately recognize. In an April 10, 2014 NPR interview, one of the songwriters, Kristen Anderson-Lopez, distills the message as: "don't allow fear or shame to keep you from being the person you should be."

The song was the hook for me, but it was just the beginning.

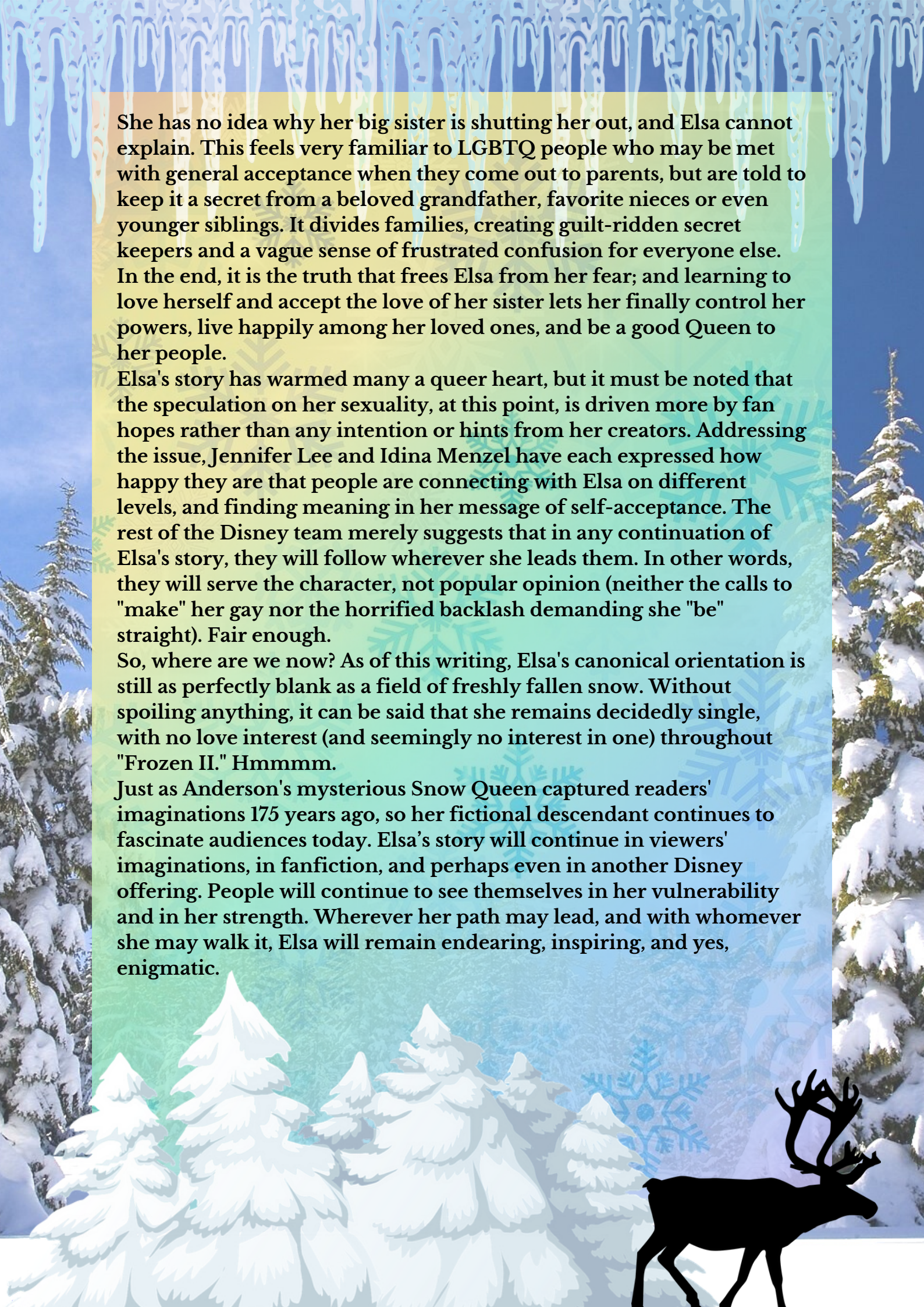
I read more analysis of Elsa's character and, most importantly, I finally watched the film. I understand that the way that Elsa reads as potentially gay goes far beyond a wildly popular, imminently relatable song.

First off, Elsa has no (male) love interest. That alone is extraordinarily unusual. Revolutionary even. She is a Queen without a King. Nor is she dreaming of a handsome man to sweep her off her feet, as Anna does. I am thrilled that "Frozen" centers on the familial love between the sisters, and departs from form in eschewing an ending that 50 years ago would have surely featured a double (straight) wedding. I love the message that Elsa doesn't need a romantic relationship at this moment to have a full, engaged life. It's just very unusual. Does being single make her gay? Of course not, but it doesn't make her straight either.

The film provides a deeper, richer examination of the issues referenced in the song "Let It Go." As Disney described Elsa's struggle back in 2013, "She lives in fear as she wrestles with a mighty secret." As a child, Elsa is happy and secure, but eventually she must start hiding her deepest self. Her parents love her but shut her away, not only to protect others but to protect Elsa, herself, from the cruelty and judgment of the outside world. Fearful, ashamed, guilt-ridden about who she is, she learns that her emotions are different and dangerous. She must literally repress her feelings. While Anna dreams of dancing with a dashing prince, Elsa must resign herself to a life devoid of love and affection; after all, falling in love might conjure a blizzard; touching her beloved's hand could freeze their flesh solid.

Elsa's secret keeps her isolated not only from herself but from everyone in her life – her subjects, her parents, even her adored little sister. Anna's confusion is palpable; her loneliness is heart-breaking.





She has no idea why her big sister is shutting her out, and Elsa cannot explain. This feels very familiar to LGBTQ people who may be met with general acceptance when they come out to parents, but are told to keep it a secret from a beloved grandfather, favorite nieces or even younger siblings. It divides families, creating guilt-ridden secret keepers and a vague sense of frustrated confusion for everyone else. In the end, it is the truth that frees Elsa from her fear; and learning to love herself and accept the love of her sister lets her finally control her powers, live happily among her loved ones, and be a good Queen to her people.

Elsa's story has warmed many a queer heart, but it must be noted that the speculation on her sexuality, at this point, is driven more by fan hopes rather than any intention or hints from her creators. Addressing the issue, Jennifer Lee and Idina Menzel have each expressed how happy they are that people are connecting with Elsa on different levels, and finding meaning in her message of self-acceptance. The rest of the Disney team merely suggests that in any continuation of Elsa's story, they will follow wherever she leads them. In other words, they will serve the character, not popular opinion (neither the calls to "make" her gay nor the horrified backlash demanding she "be" straight). Fair enough.

So, where are we now? As of this writing, Elsa's canonical orientation is still as perfectly blank as a field of freshly fallen snow. Without spoiling anything, it can be said that she remains decidedly single, with no love interest (and seemingly no interest in one) throughout "Frozen II." Hmmm.

Just as Anderson's mysterious Snow Queen captured readers' imaginations 175 years ago, so her fictional descendant continues to fascinate audiences today. Elsa's story will continue in viewers' imaginations, in fanfiction, and perhaps even in another Disney offering. People will continue to see themselves in her vulnerability and in her strength. Wherever her path may lead, and with whomever she may walk it, Elsa will remain endearing, inspiring, and yes, enigmatic.





# The Portrayal of Disney Characters in Once Upon a Time

By Mike Flynn

[Warning – Contains spoilers if you have not watched the series.]

Over its 7 seasons, the series 'Once Upon a Time' has introduced many Disney characters, both beloved and reviled. I found the concept to be an inspired idea – bringing all of the most-beloved fairy-tale characters into one place and giving them their own individual stories and challenges to face.

Set in a town called Storybrook, Main, the characters started with no memory of who they actually are, due to a curse cast by the Evil Queen, Regina. With the help of the saviour – the child of Snow White and Prince Charming – they set about trying to thwart the curse and save everyone.


Throughout the first few seasons, this seemed like a brilliant idea; every season introduced new characters, plot twists, and perils which the town had to face. It was also fascinating, as we were given flashbacks to each character's history – an insight into how they became who they are. However, as you get into the later seasons, you do start to get a little sick of the number of times they re-use the initial plot twist of cursing everyone to forget. It is a shame that the writers couldn't come up with a different concept to move the storyline forward; if they had, then maybe it

would still be on the air now.

Unfortunately, I found the last season (season 7) to be an utter disappointment. Not only did they curse the town to forget – yet again – but they also moved the town to a different location and disappointed fans by removing many of the original characters that they loved (a choice which would prove to be the final nail in the coffin). To keep cursing people with the same curse over and over was a big mistake. It lost them a lot of ratings because people lost interest in the series due to the unimaginative and repetitive premise.

Negative points aside, on the whole, I found the series to be great! It has a wonderful array of characters who you easily grow to love, the storylines are brilliant (bar the above of course – although the whole forgetting curse tends to be how they end a series or





put it on a break, so it's minimal really). I also love how each series presents a new set of Disney characters, both heroes and villains. I used to look forward to them bringing out the DVD so that my family and I could watch the latest instalment (unfortunately it was not aired on TV in the UK until much later).

Now to the juicy bit – how they portrayed each of the Disney characters. On the whole, I commend them for their unique character portrayal. Some of the characters they developed are truly fantastic, like Rumpelstiltskin (played by Robert Carlyle), Hook (played by Colin O'Donoghue), Regina, aka the Evil Queen (played by Lana Parrilla), and so many others. The life that these characters bring to the role, while also retaining the essence of the original Disney characters, is amazing; it makes me wish that Disney would bring out more films focusing in on these characters with their complicated backstories. Take, for example, Rumpelstiltskin, arguably a nonentity character in the Disney world, and yet the character that they build in this series is fantastic and rich with backstory, as well as full of depth, with fantastic sayings and quips like 'deary,' 'the dark one,' and 'magic always comes with a price.'

It is true that they have also taken a lot of poetic licence with some of the characters – changing their backstories to fit within the world that they have built, but in doing so they give the viewer something different to watch; rather than the same old stories we've

already been told. I find this breath of fresh air approach to be refreshing and effectively done on the whole, especially as they always retain the essence of each character's origins. I believe that they've done very well with a lot of the backstories – giving a new perspective on why exactly the characters are who they are, and allowing the writers to re-write some of the characters in a new light – turning villains into heroes. Take Regina for example, even when she was evil in the beginning, you still felt sorry for her on some level, as she had clear and justifiable reasons to be the way she was.

In fact, in my opinion, there are very few characters which I think they have not been represented well in this series. I only have a couple of complaints on that score. My first complaint would be when they chose to depict Mulan as a lesbian. I have no issue at all with them doing this with Red Riding Hood and Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz – neither of whom have historic love interests – but Mulan was very much in love with Shang in the original Disney, and I found this sudden change to be too much of a break from the original Disney character for me. My second complaint would be that their interpretation of Pan was a little on the dark side – effective and different, but a bit depressing and dark for any lovers of this classic Disney tale.

There are a few other questionable character choices that they make, mostly to do with how they develop the existing characters over the series – such as adding a touch of darkness to some of the heroes and a touch of light



to the villains. However, I believe that on the whole, this degree of artistic license added a more realistic touch to the characters, and allowed the writers to explore them with more believable depth.

Although the essence of original Disney characters is usually very black or white, the newer films produced by Disney seem to be going in a slightly different direction – with characters not being paragons of good or evil, but rather a degree of more relatable shades in between; Maleficent, for example, who is portrayed as being both hero and villain. I think the writers of this series decided to move in this direction in order to create a more believable, fallible, and realistic set of characters. Overall, I think that 'Once Upon A Time' has managed to successfully build upon our beloved Disney characters. I love how they have interlaced the backstories of these characters, so that they all know each other (or at the very least know of each other) – not an easy feat when you have such a diverse range of characters and storylines. Although this, in itself, is a break from the original Disney stories, it doesn't detract from the essence of these classical tales – good triumphing over evil, happily ever after (to a degree), heroes and villains, right and wrong, true loves kiss, etc.

If you haven't already watched this series, or if you gave up on it early on, I would highly recommend watching it through. It is a great little series and one which I feel is well worth the effort. Personally, I would recommend watching only up to and including

season 6 – the storyline up to this point (bar the curses) is interesting and engaging – there is even a musical episode, which does not disappoint! But I would leave Season 7 on the shelf as it was a bit of a let-down, probably as they knew that they were close to cancellation.





# What I Learned from the Great Mouse Detective

*By Tianna Williams*

I'm slowly working my way through our VHS collection of the Disney classics. The other day my daughter and I snuggled on the couch with a bowl of frozen cherries (those were, in hindsight, a really bad idea) and watched *The Great Mouse Detective*. What I discovered was a surprisingly deep tale of morality.

In this seemingly benign children's movie, we have our classic archetypal figures: Professor Ratigan is the villain – a thoroughly nasty, vindictive, and manipulative character. On the other side, we have Basil from Baker Street, a Sherlockesque little mouse, with a quick mind and an inexplicable drive to see his long-standing rival behind bars. And, while we might sigh at the predictability of these characters, they speak a profound truth about the two ways we can choose to live our lives. Although very obviously a rat, Ratigan lusts after the throne of the mouse kingdom, threatening, manipulating, and even executing anyone who would get in his way. The story begins with the kidnapping of a gentle-hearted toymaker, who is forced to create a robot – which later will impersonate the queen and

appoint Ratigan as the Queen's consort, effectively giving him control over the entire realm.

Basil, on the other hand, is obsessed with truth and justice. He has applied his very keen mind to the purpose of exposing criminals and seeing them dealt with, even at risk to his own life. Throughout the movie, he follows the evidence where it leads, overcoming dangerous obstacles, traps, and his own discouragement, to eventually confront his enemy in an epic final clash.

Ratigan represents a life ordered towards itself, and what it thinks is the right way of things. He sees what





he wants – what he thinks he deserves – and is willing to go to any length to achieve it. He attempts to manipulate reality to conform it to himself.

Basil represents a life ordered towards the highest good. Utterly unconcerned with himself, he seeks only to follow the truth.

It may be tempting to think of the villain as "out there," a force opposing us and threatening our happiness... but the villain hides within our own hearts because the villain may be the idea that we somehow deserve happiness. It might be the American dream of a big house, a nice car, and well-paying career. It might be the belief that if I just go to church and be "nice," I'll have earned my ticket to heaven. Perhaps it's a political ideology, self-help program, religion, organization, or advertisement that tells me if I just do A, B, and C, everything will finally be right in the world. The villain may even simply be a thousand tiny ideas or little lies that we've unknowingly bought into.

## The solution: The Resurrection.

At the end of the movie, Ratigan's own desperate attempts to destroy Basil drag them both to their deaths, but from out of the depths, the heroic little mouse rises victorious.

This children's tale is an allegory of the ways we must die to ourselves, to the ideologies, lies, habits, and sins that would lead us away from truth. This is no grand fable, nor a one-time event, but a million micro-deaths and resurrections.

I would argue that the grace of God is being able to see, one moment at a time, these small failings and to allow them to fall away, so that truth and goodness may rise. It is allowing our crucified and risen Lord to work in us.

We live in a time when people are protesting more loudly than ever, ready to beat down every last vestige of oppression. But peace will only come when we realize that peace begins in our own hearts – in the hearts of a people whose lives are ordered towards truth, life, goodness, beauty, and justice. A people utterly unconcerned with themselves, who seek only to follow the highest good wherever it leads.

A people seeking first the kingdom of God.





# Enchantress

By *Vanessa Parry*



She staggered into the little town of Ville-la-Foret on the heels of a storm. Some early risers saw her but paid little attention, for pestilence stalked the land, driving many people onto the road from city and hamlet alike. Some towns closed their gates to prevent strangers from entering, for it was said they could bring the

sickness with them, but Ville-la-Foret was little more than a village and had never needed the fortification of walls. Its only defense – and it served well enough – was that it was far off the beaten track.

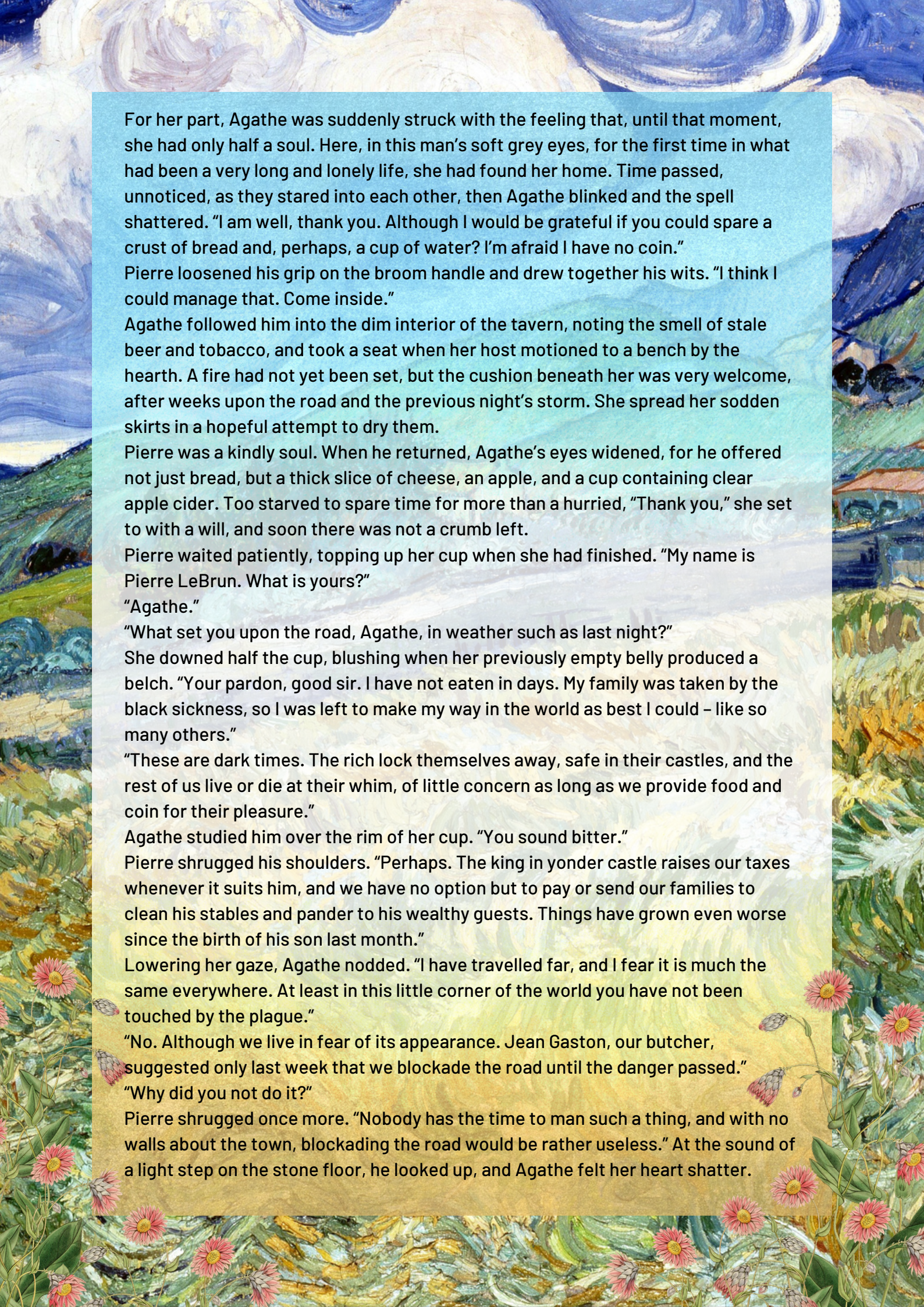
Pierre LeBrun opened the doors to the Boars Head tavern and began to sweep leaves and debris from the threshold. That's when he saw her, lying upon the steps below the market cross. The town hall clock had not yet tolled six, so the square was empty, but for the bundle of rags lying so still.

Was she alive or dead? For some time, Pierre only leaned upon his broom, considering. If he went to examine her, he could find himself responsible, and it was clear from her clothes that she had no money of her own to pay for any care. If she lived, he would feel obliged to feed her, perhaps even house her. If dead, he would be obliged to bury her. He was not a hard man – indeed, many considered him a little too free with his favours – but both options demanded coin that he could not spare. The small tavern had provided a living for three generations of the LeBrun family, but increasing burden of taxation was making the prospect of a fourth slimmer daily.

The figure stirred. Not dead, then. Pierre threw caution to the wind and stepped into the square, calling, "Hello? Do you need help?" Any further questions were stopped in his throat when she rolled over and levered herself upright.

Despite a liberal coating of mud and some very ragged clothing, the golden eyes now turned upon him thrust all else from Pierre's mind. Their glowing depths seemed to bore into his heart, and he would later secretly vow to a friend that if she had asked him to run away with her at that very moment, he would have dropped his broom and done so without a second thought.





For her part, Agathe was suddenly struck with the feeling that, until that moment, she had only half a soul. Here, in this man's soft grey eyes, for the first time in what had been a very long and lonely life, she had found her home. Time passed, unnoticed, as they stared into each other, then Agathe blinked and the spell shattered. "I am well, thank you. Although I would be grateful if you could spare a crust of bread and, perhaps, a cup of water? I'm afraid I have no coin."

Pierre loosened his grip on the broom handle and drew together his wits. "I think I could manage that. Come inside."

Agathe followed him into the dim interior of the tavern, noting the smell of stale beer and tobacco, and took a seat when her host motioned to a bench by the hearth. A fire had not yet been set, but the cushion beneath her was very welcome, after weeks upon the road and the previous night's storm. She spread her sodden skirts in a hopeful attempt to dry them.

Pierre was a kindly soul. When he returned, Agathe's eyes widened, for he offered not just bread, but a thick slice of cheese, an apple, and a cup containing clear apple cider. Too starved to spare time for more than a hurried, "Thank you," she set to with a will, and soon there was not a crumb left.

Pierre waited patiently, topping up her cup when she had finished. "My name is Pierre LeBrun. What is yours?"

"Agathe."

"What set you upon the road, Agathe, in weather such as last night?"

She downed half the cup, blushing when her previously empty belly produced a belch. "Your pardon, good sir. I have not eaten in days. My family was taken by the black sickness, so I was left to make my way in the world as best I could – like so many others."

"These are dark times. The rich lock themselves away, safe in their castles, and the rest of us live or die at their whim, of little concern as long as we provide food and coin for their pleasure."

Agathe studied him over the rim of her cup. "You sound bitter."

Pierre shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps. The king in yonder castle raises our taxes whenever it suits him, and we have no option but to pay or send our families to clean his stables and pander to his wealthy guests. Things have grown even worse since the birth of his son last month."


Lowering her gaze, Agathe nodded. "I have travelled far, and I fear it is much the same everywhere. At least in this little corner of the world you have not been touched by the plague."

"No. Although we live in fear of its appearance. Jean Gaston, our butcher, suggested only last week that we blockade the road until the danger passed."

"Why did you not do it?"

Pierre shrugged once more. "Nobody has the time to man such a thing, and with no walls about the town, blockading the road would be rather useless." At the sound of a light step on the stone floor, he looked up, and Agathe felt her heart shatter.





A cool female voice asked, "Who's she?"

Agathe's gift had been birthed when her body shed its first drop of blood, and she had many years since to hone its skills. She could see into every heart, and she knew, at once, that this girl's heart was scarlet with avarice. What Cecile wanted, Cecile got, by fair means or foul – and Cecile wanted Pierre LeBrun.

For his part, Pierre drew on his brightest smile. Cecile had been his only real option for a wife in this small town, although now he wished he had waited a few months more before making that choice. "Cecile, this is Agathe. She was out in last night's storm, so I invited her in for some breakfast. Agathe, this is my fiancé, Cecile Gaston."

Cecile drew closer and sniffed delicately, fine dark brows arched in an otherwise nondescript face. "Well, she seems to have finished eating, so perhaps we should detain her no further. No doubt she has a long road before her," she remarked somewhat pointedly, and her thin lips quirked in a supercilious smile as she added, "From the smell of her, she certainly has a long road behind."

The traveller came slowly to her feet, and something in her demeanour made Cecile step back. Agathe dropped her gaze and the moment passed.

Cecile made a brisk shooing motion. "Begone, woman. We need no beggars in Ville-la-Foret."


Agathe paused to smile warmly at Pierre. "Thank you for your kindness, sir. May it be rewarded in the fullness of time." Cecile, she did not acknowledge, as she stepped out into the awakening bustle of the market square.

The following month Pierre LeBrun married Cecile Gaston, but Agathe could not bring herself to either witness the wedding or yet leave the town. Pierre LeBrun had been born to join his heart to hers, and she could not release the hope that one day he would be free to do so. Agathe found shelter on the fringes of the nearby forest and, for the most part, the people of Ville-la-Foret were kind. She gained a reputation as a healer for those who could not afford the doctor's fees and was paid in vegetables from their gardens, or even the occasional scrawny chicken.

With each passing year, life in the little town grew harsher. King Luise imposed additional taxes upon a country that already struggled under the ravages of relentless waves of plague. The only family that seemed to flourish in Ville-la-Foret was that of the Gaston's. Born in the same year as the prince, their son grew up tall and strong, and by the age of seven he was already an excellent shot with bow and arrow. Unfortunately, in temperament, he looked set to follow his father and older sister, developing a meanness of spirit and an excess of pride. In turn, these led him to put his own wants before all else.

Nine years after Agathe's arrival, one ray of light brightened the small town. On a clear, crisp Autumn morning, a cart rolled in, driven by a young man. He brought few possessions, but one very precious one, the tiny babe in his arms. Belle, he called her, and whether that was her church name or a term of endearment, he never told.





From his accent, Maurice was recently from Paris. For a while, people gave him a wide berth, for there were rumours that plague once more stalked the streets of that city – even the king did not visit anymore. Maurice had coin enough to purchase a small house for himself and his little daughter, and set himself up as an artist. When it became clear that there was no call for his work in such a small town he switched to the crafting of automata, which was the latest craze amongst the aristocracy. Once a year, Agathe looked after Belle for the day, while Maurice drove to the nearest town to sell his lovingly crafted work – no doubt at a price far below their worth, for he could only ever be considered a fair and generous businessman. The little girl was a joy to care for, sweet and inquisitive. Over time Agathe's gift sensed something else – some high purpose in Belle's future. It became increasingly clear to the enchantress' golden gaze that the child was destined for either great joy or great sadness, and that the fate of the very land itself was somehow tied up in her.

One warm spring afternoon, the young prince and his entourage were riding in the forest when their path crossed that of Agathe, who was collecting firewood. A quick glance into his heart as she regathered her sticks was all that the deeply shocked Agathe needed to grasp that Adam's soul was the other half of Belle's. Their stations were so far apart, and after his mother's death, Prince Adam strayed so rarely from the gilded realm of his father's castle. Agathe could not see how they would ever come together. Indeed, even were they to do so, what would Adam ever see in a lowly craftsman's daughter? What could they possibly find in common? Yet, as she made her way home, she couldn't dismiss what she now knew, and that knowledge fixed itself more firmly in Agathe's mind with each passing year.

King Luise moved his court to another part of the country in the same year that the Gaston's son joined the army – and many a father in Ville-la-Forêt heaved a sigh of relief at both events. Gaston, as he was simply known by then – for his father had died a few months before – was a wild and wayward young man who took what he wanted, without thought of the cost to anyone else. His most recent acquisition was the Boars Head. Cecile had died in childbirth a year earlier, but any hopes of joining with Pierre that Agathe may still have held were dashed when the widower died during a buying trip to Paris only months later.

The Boars Head had long since fallen deeply into debt, and the Gaston family had been keeping it afloat for the sake of their daughter. It now became entailed to Gaston, who installed a manager – for it was to be his living when he returned from the army. Needless to say, the cost of ale and brandy climbed even higher, but taxation ensured that nobody had money for drink anyway, so it was little hardship to most of the community.

If anyone harboured a hope that the departure of King Luise would bring any relaxation of the crippling taxes, they were swiftly disillusioned. Prince Adam had come of age and, as the new ruler of this corner of France, appeared to be even harsher than his father had been. To pay their debts, many in Ville-la-Forêt found



themselves indentured as servants in his increasingly extravagant castle. For her part, Belle was growing into a young girl as beautiful inside as out. Agathe knew that the time drew ever nearer when she and Adam were destined to meet. Of the two options in Belle's future, sorrow now seemed the most likely. With her love of learning and her father's romantic ideals, even if she ignored her heart's destiny, Belle would find no lad to suit her among the tradition-bound folk of Ville-la-Forêt. For his part, Adam was set upon a dissolute lifestyle that would eventually end in pain for him too. In his hedonistic pursuit of pleasure, he still lived as a spoilt child – not as a man wise enough to rule the land and eventually raise children of his own. Adam was destined to repeat the loveless mistakes of his father, and Agathe could not bear to think of Belle living the rest of her existence as lonely and alone as she. The arrival of Belle at Agathe's hovel one afternoon, seeking herbs to soothe the pain of her first courses, finally set the enchantress upon a path that she had been considering for some time. Indeed, she concluded, time was exactly what was needed -- time for Belle to mature in body, and time for Adam to mature in spirit. So it was that on that very night, in the teeth of another storm, Agathe drew a glamour about herself and picked a blood-red rose from the prince's very own garden. Exotic music drifted on the air as she gathered her will outside of the ballroom windows. A thousand fine candles glowed upon rich silks and glittered in the gems draped about a hundred pale and beautiful throats as the enchantress knocked upon the clear glass of the ballroom doors. Lightning flashed. Thunder crashed. Music and dancers swirled to a halt as the doors blew open before her.





# Disney Photos By Veronica Lynn



**Maleficent. Disney's Festival of Fantasy Parade - Orlando.**

**The Evil Queen showing her splendor to her subjects - Anaheim.**



**Girls just wanna have fun!  
- Orlando.**

**Hook from the Epcot Flower and Garden Festival - Orlando.**





**Aladdin with two Disney Princesses.**



**Belle and I had a delightful conversation about how everything is bigger in Texas, especially the libraries. We also marveled over coffee's ability to transform a grumpy Beast into a cheerful Prince. Orlando.**



**The Fairy Godmother giving me some much needed guidance and encouragement - Orlando.**



**Gaston said it was a pleasure for me to meet him - Orlando**



# Disney Inspired Poems

By Donna Ferguson Dudley



## *Midnight's Reckoning*



The clock has struck the midnight hour, and hastening down the stair,  
leaving behind glass slipper, soon to be discovered there,  
was sweet and lovely Cinderella in ballroom finery.  
Heart full of love and longing to stay, she was not free.  
The magic that had changed her clothes with charm of Fairy's spell,  
was coming to an ending and she knew very well  
that all would be as 'twas before; her coach would pumpkin be,  
and lovely steeds would change to mice, in a trice, most certainly.  
Sad was her heart, but hope lived on; somehow, she'd overcome  
and be claimed by her own true love, her Prince, 'fore tale was done!



## *Surprise Silhouette*

Wee silhouette, 'hind sinuate, Fall leaf by sun revealed  
a shape that only Fae could be, as quickly my steps stilled,  
to stare in joy and wonderment, to see her hover there,  
(her tiny wings by sunlight pierced, and ponytailed, her hair)!

True Tinker Bell, if silhouette could be an indication.  
"On visit here, from Neverland?" I mused, in contemplation.

I looked around for Peter Pan; well-hidden, sure, he was.

If he were anywhere about, I must have given pause!

I do not think he e'er appears to those who are full-grown.

If Tink had known she was revealed, I'm sure she would have flown.

I tried my best not to alarm, but quietly slipped away,  
holding forever in my heart, sweet memory of that day!





# SORROW MAY LAST

By Meagan McKinstry

The thinnest sliver of light crept through the slim opening in the folds of the tent in which John Smith was held captive, casting shadows on the cloth walls around him and allowing him to glimpse the dark shapes of the two formidable warriors who guarded him. His wrists were numb from the tightly tied leather thongs that bound him to the wooden pole, and his stomach ached from the lack of an evening meal. He supposed the natives felt it unnecessary to feed him when he would

lose his life at sunrise anyway.

He'd been a prisoner for several hours, and all he could feel was hopelessness. There was no chance that he could reason with these people – he and his shipmates had invaded and devastated their land, and now it appeared that he had killed one of their own. His fate was already determined. There would be no mercy for him, even if he wept and begged.

Anguish and despair welled up in his heart, consuming him. He wished he could at least see Pocahontas one more time before his death, but Powhatan would never allow her to visit him. Pocahontas, of course, was not one to follow the rules set out for her, but John knew the vigilance of her people well enough to know that they would not abandon their position or lose concentration for long enough to permit her entrance.

So, this was it.

He was going to die, and he was never going to see his love again. How could life be so cruel, to take from him the soulmate that he had only just found? He felt so much pain at the thought of losing her that the bliss of Heaven itself would not be able to expel it.

And Pocahontas – it was unbearable to imagine the suffering that his death would bring her. Even worse was the fact that not only would he be the cause of her suffering, but he would be able to do nothing at all to help her.

He wondered if he could have avoided this situation somehow, if there was a way that he could have protected Thomas without sacrificing himself. Could he have done things differently so that the warrior would not have died in the first place? One moment, he'd been kissing Pocahontas, lost in the euphoria of their intimacy





In the next, he had been tackled to the ground, where he found himself dodging the crudely made weapon repeatedly swinging at his head.

Running on adrenaline, he'd been able to do nothing but try to avoid the blows that threatened to crush his skull. He had been distantly aware of Pocahontas begging the warrior to stop, but the man had simply shoved her away, pushing her to the ground. Anger flared inside of him, his protective instinct taking hold but, before he'd even had time to intensify his struggles, a gunshot sounded. The savage had fallen away from him, his body landing with a splash in the creek, and then he lay still, unmoving – dead.

John had looked around wildly as he heard more savages approaching, and his gaze landed on Thomas, who was still standing wide-eyed, with a smoking rifle in his hands.

"J-John!" Thomas had stammered. "He was going to kill you!"

"Yes, I know, Thomas, just get out of here!" he'd yelled.

The young man looked at him fearfully. "I can't leave y...."

"GO!"

Thankfully, Thomas had obeyed, taking a few hesitant steps backward before turning and running at full speed away from the scene.

In the next instant, a band of savages had burst into the clearing, and it was then that John had realized, sickly, that they would think him to be the murderer. But he'd had no time to dwell on it any further. Several strong pairs of hands grabbed him, throwing him to his knees. His hands had been wrenched behind him and tied tightly; then he was hauled back to his feet and dragged away, barely managing to stay afoot as they roughly directed him toward their village.

When they'd arrived, the Chief had immediately declared that John would die the next morning. Ever since then, he'd been a captive in this tent, sitting on his knees with his arms secured to the pole.

His concern for Pocahontas made him feel sick. She had seen him apprehended, knew exactly what fate awaited him. He'd even heard her trying to convince her father to spare his life. Yes, she knew just what was to happen and John wanted desperately to shed his bonds and run to her, to dispel the misery that he knew consumed her, just as it consumed him. But the knots enclosing his wrists remained tight, and the watchful eyes of his guards never wavered. He would die the next morning, and he would never see Pocahontas again.

Closing his eyes, he leaned back against the pole, trying to imagine her sitting beside him. Sleep would elude him; he knew that, but perhaps he could chase away this living nightmare if he held on to thoughts of the woman whose love had given his world new meaning.





# THE END OF THE DARK FEY

BY YAKIRA GOLDSBERRY

Maleficent whimpered and cowered down, as another bright light flashed above the hollow.

"Shh. Hush now, my little one." The soft voice in her ear soothed her as she was rocked in her mother's arms.

Maleficent snuggled closer, folding her dark brown wings close, as she stared at the fairies lighting up the summer night – floating like fireflies, their tiny voices lifted in song.

Trying to drown out the sounds of war. Groups of Dark Fey, mothers and their children, were huddled in the hollow,

waiting for the war to end. Maleficent and her mother stood among them. Maleficent could see in the dim light many of the other Dark Fey children curled up in their mothers' laps. Wings rustled, and Maleficent turned her gaze to one of the mothers. Her wings were bright red, green, and yellow, like jewels. She leaned over her baby, trying to stop him from crying.

She turned her gaze back to her own mother. "I'm scared, Mama," She whispered, looking up into her mother's kind, yellow eyes. The soft smile that turned her lips up always made her look brave, but now Maleficent could see the fear warring to surface. "I don't want the humans to get us."

"And they won't." Her mother stroked her soft hair, right between her horns. "Papa and the others are strong. They'll keep us safe."

As much as she wanted to believe that, Maleficent wasn't sure if she could. She could hear the distant sounds of fighting over the chorus of fairy songs; the wild screams of the Dark Fey, the earthy moans of the Tree People, and, above it all, the horrible noise of the humans' machines – whistles and thumps that were so unnatural, they sent a shudder across her skin.

"Don't listen to them, Maleficent," her mother said, covering her ear with her free hand. "Listen to me."

The noise of the battle was muffled, but only a little. Maleficent placed her hand over the top of her mother's, then pressed her other ear over her mother's heart. The steady beat thrummed against her ear, soothing her own racing heart.

Slowly, her muscles unknotted until she was fully relaxed. Air whooshed in and out of Mama's lungs. Blood rushed to and from her heart with each split-second thump. Maleficent listened to the song of her mother's heart and found herself drifting off to sleep. Everything would be okay, as long as the song continued.

Her mother stiffened, and Maleficent's eyes snapped open, and her fingers curled, tightening around her arm.

"Mama?" Maleficent lifted her head. Her mother's eyes were wide.

"Hush," she hissed, her wings snapping open.





Maleficent held her breath as silence descended on the hollow. The fairies were no longer singing. Lights no longer flashed in the sky and shouts no longer came from the battlefield. Maleficent's heart pounded loudly in her ears.

Shadows flew overhead toward the battlefield, streaking across the star-scattered sky. Her mother's gaze hardened, and she gently pushed Maleficent away.

"Stay here," she whispered.

Fear clamped around her heart, and she clung to her mother's arm.

"Don't leave me!" she whimpered, but her mother pried her fingers away.

"I won't be long, dear one. Now stay here."

Golden light glowed around her fingers and floated toward Maleficent. It touched her chest, and, immediately, her eyelids drooped. Her mother spread her dark wings and leaped into the sky.

Maleficent fought against the magic. She wanted – no, needed – to follow Mama, to hide within her arms. Mama could keep her safe. Without her, Maleficent would be all alone, and the humans might try to take her away. Or worse.

Shivering, she crawled up the steep sides of the hollow and peered out. Through the glowing flowers, she could just about see her mama, flying out from the woods into the open field. Fire lit the sky. A wild screech filled the air, and Maleficent fell back as fire roared toward her. Screams filled the air.

"Mama!" Maleficent twisted, opening her wings, hoping to stop her fall. She slammed into the earth.

Fire roared toward her, and the world went black.

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Something wet splashed onto her cheek. She opened her eyes and blinked against the rain falling from the bleak sky overhead. A wind blew, ruffling her wet feathers and tugging at her damp dress. She pushed herself up onto all fours and looked around the hollow. None of the Dark Fey were there – not even the glowing fairies. All that was left was some loose feathers and singed grass. Maleficent reached out and picked up one of the feathers. It was bright red.

"Mama?" Fear set her shivering. When no one answered, her breathing quickened.

"Mama!" she called out desperately, scrambling to her feet and stumbling from the hollow.

The glowing flowers were now ash. Many of the trees were singed, their blackened branches twisted. Stumbling forward, she slogged through the wet ash to the tree line and then froze, afraid of what she might see. Already, she could make out the dim outline of bodies, some with horns and wings.

Maleficent fell to her knees. Was her mother among the dead? Her father? Tears pricked her eyes and splashed down her cheeks, mingling with the rain.

"Mama, Papa!" she cried over and over, but all that answered her was the sound of her own echo. She pulled her legs up and huddled against the blackened remains of a burned tree. Silence blanketed the forest, save for the sound of dripping water and Maleficent's bitter sobs. She was alone, now – all alone.

She cried well into the morning, her cheeks growing hot, and her vision blurred. When her tears finally slowed, and the wind cooled her cheeks, she looked back at the forest. One shining light emerged. Then another. They drifted toward her, whispering words of comfort. No, she wasn't alone – not exactly, anyway. A small seed of hope bloomed in her chest.

Maleficent looked back at the battlefield. She would wait for her mother to come back. No matter how long it took, she would wait.





# THE EVOLVING PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN DISNEY

By Carina Demonceaux



In some of the first Disney movies – such as Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty – women were used to seeing themselves portrayed as damsels in distress, with weak or absent fathers and evil stepmothers using and abusing them. These princesses only found solace in a man's presence, and their sole aim seemed to be to marry a handsome prince in order to leave their misery behind them. It was as if society at the time was pushing the idea to young women and little girls that the only path to happiness was to be found through a man and secured by their beauty and capability as a housewife.

In 1989, Ariel was introduced to us as a young woman thirsty for adventure, looking for a place where she could belong. The new family dynamic portrayed in this movie was that the heroine still had no mother around, but her father was present – very much so, in the case of King Triton, who appeared

to be very controlling and overbearing when it came to his daughters. The main goal of the heroine was still to charm her beloved prince and run off with him into the sunset. Even though the moral of the story could be said to be 'don't disobey your father,' Triton still gave her exactly what she wanted at the end of the tale, even though she went behind his back. This, however inadvertently, teaches young girls that no matter how badly they disobey their parents, they can still get away with it. It also shows that living away from their loved ones and renouncing their identity could be the ideal outcome of their disobedience.

In the 1990s, a new concept was introduced – a kind of subtle feminism. Some of my favorite "princesses" were and still are Belle, Pocahontas, and Esmeralda. All three of these women were from totally different backgrounds. One was a commoner with an eccentric father; the second, an indigenous princess, strong and proud of her heritage; and the third, the equivalent of an exotic dancer, using her body as a piece of art to get herself by in life. The only things that they had in common were their passion and their thirst for freedom while still acknowledging their feelings, because no one can





live without love or attraction.

Belle was fierce. She was beautiful yet nerdy. She gave us the idea that you could be pretty and smart, and that we didn't need to give in to men's desires in order to be fulfilled. Her father gave her advice, which he thought was good, but he didn't forcefully impose his will or societal pressure on her. He knew that she was special and he was there for her just as she was for him. When he disappeared, she didn't ask for anyone else's help. She went searching for him without telling a single soul. She didn't hesitate to trade her life for her father's, and she didn't do so for the love of a man, but rather, to honor the one who raised her. As her situation progresses, she realizes that the beast in front of her has more to offer than what is visible, and decides to give him a chance. She falls in love with his soul and not his looks, as she has no clue at all that he will ever return to his human form.

Ultimately, she is the one who saves him and not the other way around.

Pocahontas is another one of those strong-willed, naturally gorgeous women. She was fierce, inquisitive, and cherished her freedom. Her father was very proud of his daughter, and he had big plans for her, thinking it best to secure a good marriage between her and his strongest soldier. She, on the other hand, was not interested in marriage to the man of her father's choosing – she wanted to discover the world for herself, and she wanted to be sure that she married for love if she ever did so at all. When she met John Smith, she did not instantly fall head-over-heels for him. Instead, she confidently questioned him and his motives. Once again, she took control of her own destiny. She was the one to save his life, and while most stories end with the woman giving everything up to follow the man she loves, hers did not. She let him go, choosing to stay with her loved ones, even though she had her father's blessing to go.

Esmeralda was a whole new kind of "princess." Her character was inspired by French literature and she was portrayed, in part, as a medieval exotic dancer, but mainly as an artist and an activist! She didn't shy away from defending the less fortunate or standing up for the weak, and she didn't give in to any man – no matter how charming or powerful he was. She saved a soldier's life, kept her dignity in front of a corrupt judge, and risked her life for the cause that she believed in.

These fictional characters paved the way for a new generation of young women, teaching them that you can love someone without giving up your identity or your beliefs, and that good men can also appreciate a strong woman, and not just see them as a pretty face or a good housekeeper. I think that these seemingly innocent cartoons have really had an influence in shaping kids who grew up in the 90's, and that they still have a powerful effect on the minds of children today.





# Those Were the Days

By M. C. Pehrson

Television arrived at our San Fernando Valley home in the early days of broadcast, thanks to already outdated sets that my dad brought home and got working. Since we lived in the Los Angeles area, we picked up several channels through our roof antenna, all in beautiful black-and-white. My mom fell in love with soap operas. My favorite show was *Fury* ("The story of a horse and the boy who loves him..."). My brother Terry preferred *Sky King*, about a heroic pilot and his pretty niece who flew into one adventure after another. Disney's weekday afternoon show, *The Mickey Mouse Club*, was popular with both of us kids... but there was one show that we liked even better.

On Sunday evenings, Terry and I always dropped whatever we were doing and came running to watch Walt Disney's *Disneyland*. That delightful show later changed its name multiple times, but no matter what it was called, each hour-long segment featured classic cartoons, nature shows, live-action serials, or one-shot tales. What I liked best about it was the personalized introductions by Walt Disney himself. Looking back, I can see that Disney was the Mr. Rogers of that era – a kind, gentle man who understood children and seemed to speak directly to each one of us. Having endured an unhappy childhood, he spent his entire life trying to recapture it for himself and for all youngsters everywhere. This shone through his many projects, including the famous amusement park, *Disneyland*, which opened to the public in 1955, and I was privileged to visit on at least two Catholic school days.

To us, everything Disney was wonderful. Even in those early years, there was some spin-off merchandise like Daniel Boone coonskin caps and Disney character lunch pails. Coloring books were also popular. I still remember the circus-themed Toby Tyler coloring book that I got when I was bedridden with mumps at seven years of age. Toby Tyler was a lesser-known movie featuring Kevin Corcoran from movies like *Shaggy Dog*, *Old Yeller*, and *Swiss Family Robinson*. Two of those films also included the teen actor, Tommy Kirk, who played Kevin's big brother. I had a bit of a crush on Tommy.

Movies and television were very different back then. There were very few that you couldn't let the kids watch. No overt sexuality, no profanity, no graphic violence. Romantic encounters were limited to a tasteful kiss between a man and a woman and ultimately led to marriage. A lot of the



entertainment – Disney in particular – was uplifting and taught good morals.

Thanks to our Uncle Larry, Terry and I were treated to many Disney flicks and other wholesome fare. Larry, a big man in every sense of the word, zipped around LA in an old faded Mercury with travel decals scattered over its windows. There must have been a hole in the car's exhaust system because we could hear it rumbling a long way off. I remember summer evenings when Terry and I sat on our front porch, impatiently listening for that rumble as he came to pick us up for a family-friendly drive-in movie. Even as a young child, I preferred live-action films rather than the animated variety. The Absent-Minded Professor and Son of Flubber (both with Fred MacMurray) were among my favorites. The Light in the Forest also stands out, along with Big Red. Another that I especially liked was Pollyanna and other films with Hayley Mills. After seeing Parent Trap, I wanted my hair cut short like hers. My dad was a barber and did his best, but somehow my dark-haired, unruly "do" didn't come out as good as blonde Hayley's. Those were the days. Since Walt Disney's death, his brand has undergone many changes, and not all for the better, in my opinion. Some sense of innocence has been lost, but thankfully he has left a wonderful heritage in the old Disney film vault. Let's get those movies and shows out where we can see them!





# A REVIEW OF THE LION KING: LIVE-ACTION REMAKE

By Ashley Wengerd

Last month, our local public library was having a Family Movie Matinee; they were showing the live-action remake of the popular Disney movie, The Lion King.

I went to go see it, and although I liked it, I still prefer the original, animated version better. Timon and Pumbaa are funnier, it's more colorful and livelier, plus the songs just seem catchier.

However, there was one part of the movie that I never thought about when watching the animated one. During the scene where Simba and Nala visit the elephant graveyard, the hyenas surround them, causing fear and panic. Even though I knew that Mufasa would eventually come and rescue them, I still felt scared. In the live-action version, the hyenas (as well as Scar) actually look creepier than they do in the cartoon version. When Mufasa does come, he lets out this earth-shattering roar, letting everyone know that the king has arrived, and he will take no nonsense from anyone. He fights off the hyenas with no fear. He knows he is much bigger and stronger than any of them are. That scene got me thinking. Our mind is a powerful thing. We can feed it insecurities, or speak truth to ourselves. We can block out painful memories, or remember them and try not to let them define us.

Scar is like the devil. He comes around as a lion, ready to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). He wants to steal our identity in Christ, kill our self-worth, and destroy us in the process.

The hyenas could symbolize our insecurities. They sneak in, glaring at us, whispering things that spark fear in the deepest crevices of our hearts.

"You're not good enough. No one really likes you."

"You're too fat. You'll never be attractive."

"You're not making a difference in the world. You don't matter to anyone."

When we're sure that we're going to be eaten alive by our fears, Jesus (Mufasa) steps in. He is the Lion of Judah, and He's roaring, letting everyone know that He is the true king. He will speak His truth into us (Revelation 5:5).

"The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'" ~ Jeremiah 31:3

"The LORD, your God, is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." ~ Zephaniah 3:17



**“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ~ Romans 8:38-39**

**“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well.**

**“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.” ~ Psalm 139:13-18**

**“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.” ~ Psalm 56:8**

**“God sets the lonely in families.” ~ Psalm 68:6a**

**And so, as we get together with friends and family this upcoming holiday season, may we fill our tummies with turkey and feed our minds with God’s Truth. And may we always remember Jesus – the Reason for the Season.**

**Wishing you holiday blessings,**

**Ashley**





# Growing Up with Robin Hood

By *Avellina Balestri*



My first encounters with the legends of Robin Hood are, in many ways, the memory of my own maturing, realizing things for the first time which have characterized my understanding of the world around me. I suppose that this is the crux of a life-changing story; it crafts some aspect of your inner self, in a way that almost feels predestined.

I first watched the Disney animated feature when I was six, and it left me gripped by the plot. It's strange, looking back on it now, such a seemingly sugary retelling. But for my young mind, it was actually a heavier drama – or one

which I took more seriously – than other Disney films. The character of Robin, a clever fox who was both carefree and continually taking risks, suddenly brought to the fore that first realization – he could be killed.

"You know something, Rob, you're taking too many chances," Little John reminds him after a near brush with the sheriff and his posse.

And although Robin tries to deflect – insisting it was a mere "lark" – he must eventually admit, upon seeing the arrow in his hat, "This one almost had my name on it, didn't it? They're getting better, you know... you've got to admit it, they are getting better."

Perhaps many kids get their rude awakening with the traumatic shooting of Bambi's mother, or Mufasa plummeting off a cliff, but for me, it wasn't seeing it unfold that made it hit home, but rather the fear that it might.

Unlike parental figures, who seem doomed to die for the sake of a coming of age tale, Robin was the main character, the rascal, the rogue, the hero who, at the end of the day, was always looking out for the most vulnerable around him.

"I only wish I could do more," he tells that mother bunny in my very favorite scene of the film, as he hands her a bag of coins. "...and keep your chin up. Someday there'll be happiness again in Nottingham. You'll see."

"Oh, Robin Hood, Robin Hood," she murmurs as he leaves, tears filling her eyes, "you risk so much to keep our hopes alive. Bless you. Bless you."



This is the heart and soul of the film and the character – the reason why Robin becomes real. He was real to me as a child and continues in many ways to reflect reality to me as an adult. In my childhood, I wanted to be friends with him, or at least be like him – and yet, he could be killed.

In a way, the entire film is laced through with this ominous realization. We are repeatedly told how much Robin risks, and for all his banter and witty comebacks, we have to believe that he knows this too. Though we are given precious little back-story in the film, which is suitable for a feature aimed mainly at children, we still can easily feel the layers of Robin; that something inside is driving him, even though he has to do without.

Unlike many Disney films, the romance between Robin Hood and Maid Marian has a certain realism about it. When Little John suggests that Rob just “climb the castle walls... sweep her off her feet, carry her off in style,” Robin responds that “it just isn’t done that way.” He recognizes the privations of his life as an outlaw “always on the run,” and that it’s no life for a lady of quality. He also realizes that things might have changed between them because so much time has passed. “Hey, remember me, we were kids together; will you marry me?” he scoffs.

Indeed, we get to see Robin pining over what’s been lost – what he’s had to sacrifice – just as Marian pines over him and wonders if absence makes the heart grow fonder or more forgetful. Both of them need encouragement from friends to keep going. “You’re no outlaw,” Friar Tuck insists. “Someday, you’ll be called a great hero.” Robin, in typical fashion, bounces back with a joke about the friar giving them a pardon, but you can almost feel the mixed emotions underneath.

It’s only when Tuck brings up an archery contest that Robin truly bounces back, because the prize assured to the winner is a kiss from Maid Marian. This I find terribly sweet, in that Robin doesn’t even think he can truly have her, but at that moment he’s over the moon with even the prospect of a single kiss from her and indeed is willing to take ever-higher life-threatening risks. He’s a charming show-off, and he plans on putting on his “greatest performance.”

But the scenes of peril continue to mount as the story builds. At the end of the tournament, we get to see that Robin and his methods of disguise are not invincible. He can be out-foxed. And when the game is up, we get to see the serious center of Robin – his passion, his love. Marian begs for his life before Prince John, and Robin, when pressed if he returns her love, replies, “Marian, my darling, I love you more than life itself.”

This theme is repeated again in one of the most moving, and hauntingly realistic, Disney romantic ballads:



"Love, it seems like only yesterday  
You were just a child at play.  
Now you're all grown up and suddenly  
Oh, fast, those moments flee!  
Once we watched a lazy world go by,  
Now the days seem to fly  
Life is brief, but when it's gone  
Love goes on and on."

Perhaps this was also something that gripped me about the film; there was some sense of the transcendent at play. Even if everything fell apart for the characters, even if our worst fears for them came to pass, there was a deeper reality that was worth fighting, living, loving, and even dying for. Yes, it might come down to "off with his head," but a good man would shout the truth even in the face of death.

"Traitor to the crown? That crown belongs to King Richard! Long Live King Richard!"

Even though Robin survives this near brush with the ax, the sense of his vulnerability does not evaporate; indeed, it brings a certain realism about the whole world in which the story takes place. It is not a magical curse that plunges a kingdom into eternal darkness. Instead, it's the simple tyranny of a greedy prince and his government cronies, which makes the commoners suffer. As they are herded off to debtor's prison after the taxes skyrocket, the iconic rooster, Alan a Dale, sings a rainy-day lament:

"Every town has its ups and downs  
Sometimes ups outnumber the downs  
But not in Nottingham.  
I'm inclined to believe  
If we weren't so down  
We'd up and leave  
We'd up and fly if we had wings for flying  
Can't you see the tears we're crying?  
Can there be some happiness for me?  
Not in Nottingham."

There is no magic spell that can lift this; only common endurance – common decency – can help people limp through from day to day. Robin, in many ways, embodies this reality while at the same time being a very particular character. So, he is both archetypal and personal, which makes his simple acts of inverse heroism all the more poignant. But even that,



we find, continually comes with a cost.

One of the scenes that left a keen imprint on me as a child was when Friar Tuck was arrested after the sheriff tries to rob the poor box at the church and the friar attempts to fight him off with a stick. Ultimately, and predictably, he's overpowered, and irons are clapped around his neck. The story takes another dark twist when we learn that Prince John wants to hang Friar Tuck.

We get to see the sheer obsession that Prince John has with capturing Robin Hood – even surpassing his love of counting his gold. It is this desire to squelch all hope, to break the tenacity of the people that leads him to extremes, willing to hang a man of the Church to bring the outlaw into the open. As a child, I remember that scene haunting me, with the rain pattering outside the ornate glass of the prince's window, like some window into his own stormy soul.

This was a villain who was, again, somehow terribly human in his treachery, and that's what made it more profound. It is not through magic, but through the mortal coil, that wickedness is realized.

In the final act of the film – the great jailbreak – all the fears we've built up over Robin's chances of surviving to the final credits are nearly confirmed when, in typical Robin fashion, he goes back into the castle courtyard to rescue that one little bunny rabbit (somehow, Robin and bunnies make some of the best scenes of the film). The iron gate comes down, and our hero finds himself trapped.

"Take her, don't worry about me," he tells Little John as he slips her through the grating.

Robin proceeds to dodge arrows and scale castle walls in hopes of escape, only to encounter the sheriff with a lit torch. Now he must deal with fire, and the animation again takes a dark and edgy turn as the flames create an almost hellish sequence. Robin struggles to the top of a tower, with the fire licking upwards, and having no choice, leaps into the moat below. Arrows follow him as he tries to swim away.

"Kill him!" Prince John shouts from the tower, obsession marked starkly on his features. "Kill him!"

On a personal level, this was the first time in my life (only six years worth of it at the time) that a movie made me worry that a character I loved might actually die. Indeed, you can feel the sentiments of Little John and the rabbit Skippy as they wait to see if Robin will re-emerge from beneath the surface of the water.

"Come on, Rob, come on," Little John says, desperately.

"He's just got to make it," Skippy says, and all emotions are taut. Then Robin's hat surfaces, with an arrow stuck through it.



This one almost had my name on it, didn't it?"

Again, we are reminded in the starkest way... he doesn't have to make it. He never had to make it. He wasn't charmed. He just kept up that front for us. We were, in a sense, represented by all the townsfolk of Nottingham, and the risks he took for us were all too real. Heroism has a genuine cost – heroism has gravity to it.

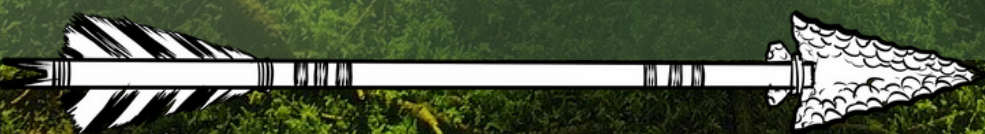
Of course, as we know, Robin does, in fact, survive. He is a clever fox, after all. And perhaps he does have a bit of charm to his life, at that. Maybe it's a blessing, in return for all the blessings he's bestowed on others, or perhaps we might see shades of the self-sacrificial pattern present to the Christian in the death and resurrection of Christ, with the going down and rising up.

I don't know if those dots connected the first time I watched it, but probably subconsciously they did, and still do. Because as a child, another favorite film (oddly for someone as sensitive as I was then) was *The Redeemer*, produced by Fr. Patrick Peyton, chronicling the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. I still watch it annually on Good Friday. I am beginning to wonder now if the story of Robin Hood actually helped me make sense of the story of Jesus Christ, or indeed simply brought it more deeply into perspective for me. Because Robin, in a most inverse way, was still living out the Gospel by filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty and was laying down his life in the process.

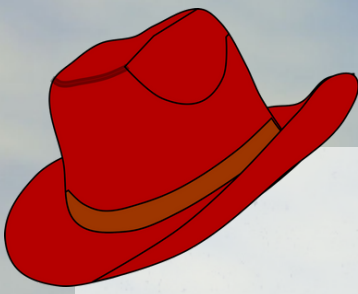
I could look at that and then look back at the cross and never be able to take my eyes off of it because it resonated with something deep inside myself.

Now that I am actually writing a Robin Hood retelling series myself – grounded in the often-brutal historical realities of the Middle Ages – these Christological themes are still vitally important in keeping the story meaningful. In a Catholic England of days gone by, I portray his faith as a grounded force in many of the decisions he makes, even when it costs him dearly. It's all bound up in the mystery of falling and rising. Robin Hood, the animated feature, continues to shine brightly in all of its childlike innocence, and yet still manages to capture the paradox of the Christian message – the defiance of it, the inverse reality of the last being first, and the first last. It reminds us of the real heroes who do whatever little things they can just to help others scrape by and give them a sparkle of hope. And it reminds us that a spirit of self-sacrifice is indeed the greatest treasure to be had.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" ~ John 15:13







# *Magical*

*By Rachel Atterholt*

Emily was very young when she found her best friend. Jessie was a cowgirl, tough and brave, with a smile that always made her happy. Jessie was there when she was lonely, and when she was sad. Emily loved Jessie. She didn't have many friends, but Jessie was enough. They were cowgirls together; sleepover buddies, wild horse riders, best friends. Emily even took her to school for the first couple of years. They always rode in the car together, Emily holding Jessie's hand the entire time – and everything was magical.

Emily met a friend at school. Her name was Amanda, and her face was full of freckles. One day, Emily left Jessie at home by mistake, and she didn't remember until she got back home again. But she still played all the time with Jessie and read picture books late at night under the covers – and everything was magical.

Emily turned ten, and she made more friends. She stopped bringing Jessie to school because none of her other friends brought their dolls to school. One day, Emily brought her friends over to her house. Jessie was sitting on the bed, as usual. Emily wasn't paying attention as she grabbed the pillow beneath her and Jessie fell under the bed. Emily was more focused on the new nail polish that Amanda had brought over – and yet things still seemed magical.

Emily turned thirteen, and her love of cowgirls faded away, like the fad it seemed to be. Jessie still lay under the bed, watching the horses on the dresser disappear and makeup take their place. Everything changed to bright neon colors and wild things. Other things were stuffed under the bed- the cowgirl hat that Emily used to never take off, her favorite lunchbox, even her ukulele – and things were less magical.

One day, when Emily was sixteen, she dropped her purse. Things spilled from the bag, rolling beside Jessie. Emily reached under the bed, and her hand found Jessie and her hat. Finally, after so long, she pulled Jessie out and smiled at her. Emily put her in her bag, and they rode in the car together, Emily holding her bag, but holding Jessie too. Emily stopped at the park that she used to visit when she was little and walked there with Jessie. When they got back home, she took Jessie out of her purse and put her and the other items that had accompanied her, under the bed, in a box – and things were no longer magical.

Years later, Emily had a son whose best friends were a cowboy and then, a little later, a space ranger. She had forgotten all about her cowgirl friend. One day, she went into her son's room to put his basket of laundry inside, and on the bed was a doll. A doll that looked ever so much like her friend. She even had the red hat that used to match her own. Emily picked her up and smiled – somehow, they had found each other again and, despite her age and the fact that she had not seen Jessie in many years, she felt very much like the little girl who'd read picture books under the blankets and held her doll's hand during car rides. Things didn't seem to have changed at all. Emily hugged Jessie – and things were magical again.





# A KINGDOM Hearts CHRISTmas

By David Glenn

Everyone in Disney Town was bright and happy, glowing with joy like the sunlight on the freshly fallen snow. All throughout the world, people were busying themselves getting ready for the upcoming Christmas festival. Some people shoveled the snow out of the streets, while others finished their last-minute shopping before the stores closed for the holiday. No matter where you looked, everyone was smiling and whistling carols for the season.

The biggest preparations, however, were going on in the large castle that overlooked the town. Inside his throne room, Mickey Mouse himself was also helping to prepare for the season. As the broom servants swept and cleaned the halls, the King made sure that everything was perfect. Straightening the red jacket with black sleeves which he wore over matching shorts, he finally found the person he'd been looking for.

"Oh, Donald. Perfect timing. How's the rest of the castle?"

"All ready for the season, Your Majesty." The court wizard smiled at his monarch. He was dressed in the blue and black robes which he formally wore on this world, and a purple hat that was similar to the ones that Merlin and Yen Sid wore, save that it was curved and bent at the top. "I used a little magic to give it an extra special shine."

"Great. Now, as soon as we finish the tree, we'll be ready for the best party this world has ever seen." The King smiled.

"Not just the best party. This will be the most magical Christmas in our history," a gentle voice said, earning the attention of everyone in the room. Queen Minnie was dressed in her traditional pink gown with its three large buttons. The crown that decorated her head was shaped like the round head and ears that served as the royal insignia for their world. "It's the least we can do to thank our friends."

"By golly, it is! Did you remember to send the invitations, Donald?" Mickey asked.

"Yes, I remembered to send the invitations. I wouldn't mess that up, unlike a certain someone."

The Queen waved her finger at him. "Now, now, Donald. That's not the way to talk at Christmas. Especially not after meeting Santa in person like you said you did. Do you want to







end up on the naughty list?"

The court magician gulped at that, before forcing a grin upon his face to show that he was determined to behave – at least until Christmas morning arrived. Turning back to his task, he used some of his magic to continue lifting ornaments to place on the massive Christmas tree, which towered almost as tall as the thrones.

With a smile, the King approached his Queen. "Ah, Minnie. Our world was so lucky that you were around while I was helping battle the Seekers of Darkness."

"I was fighting them too... just in my own way. Just because I wasn't with you, doesn't mean that I stopped standing by you." Minnie smiled back as the two rubbed noses. "Thankfully, those days are done now, so we can all enjoy the holiday."

"Not everyone." The King looked down. "Not Sora... wherever he is."

"Don't worry. He's faced and overcome more dangers than most people ever would. He'll come back. I know it!"

Her words brought a smile back to the King's face. Before he could say anything, though, a crashing sound came from outside the throne room, earning everyone's attention. Through the doors came the captain of the guard carrying a pyramid of food trays in his arms. "Goofy, be careful! That's all the food we have for the party!"

"Don't worry, Your Majesty. I've got this. I won't let anything happen," he said, right as his helmet fell off and rolled under his feet. With a gasp he began rolling around on it, swaying back and forth in an effort to keep his balance while the trays of food leaned precariously with every movement. Everyone held their breath. One wrong move would cost everyone their snacks at the upcoming party.

Everyone's hearts felt like they skipped a beat when Goofy finally fell forward. The trays of food flew through the air as if they were going to crash against the wall or on the floor, but to everyone's surprise, the food somehow landed on its intended table in a perfect arrangement, without so much as a crumb out of place.

Dusting off his orange uniform, the captain just shrugged and chuckled at what had happened. "Gawrsh. Last-minute catering."

"Be more careful next time, ya big palooka!" The court wizard yelled at his friend, steam shooting from his ears. "Do you want to ruin the party?"

"Now, now, Donald. That's no way to act on Christmas. You wouldn't want Daisy to be upset, would you?" Minnie chastised him, making the steam quickly retreat back into his ears again. He looked over at the Queen and gave a nervous chuckle.


At that moment, three ducklings ran in, wearing matching caps and sweaters. "Hey, everybody! They're here!"

"Oh, boy!" King Mickey said. "Huey, Dewey, and Louie, can you please head into town and try to entertain them with some of the festival games? We'll finish up here and send word when we're ready."

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In the town square, a trio of armored figures emerged from the Door to Light, and as the door closed, their armor vanished to reveal three heroes who had fought alongside the Guardians of Light, against the Seekers of Darkness.





"I'm glad I remembered to bring a coat. It's cold out here," a woman with short blue hair said, though her matching coat with white fur lining was more like a cloak that extended all the way down to her ankles.

"It was cold back home too, Aqua," one of her friends reminded her. He was a young boy who looked to be about fourteen to fifteen years old, with short blond hair that was spiked up. He was also wearing a white winter coat with matching gloves, to keep himself warm in the low temperature. "It feels like forever since I've been to Disney Town."

"It wasn't just you, Ven. Terra and I came on separate occasions, and now that we're all here together..." Aqua's blue eyes fell as she remembered their fallen master – the father figure in their lives. "I wish Eraqus could be here for this."

"We'll just have to make the most of it for him," the final member of their group said as he looked around. He was dressed in a brown winter coat and had a serious expression on his face. "He would want us to enjoy this holiday."

With a smile, Aqua took Terra's hand in hers. "You're right, Terra. He would want us to make the most of this."

"There's the others!" Ven pointed to a red and yellow ship that had appeared in the sky. The Highwind gummi ship served as the means of transportation for Donald and Goofy when they traveled around with the Keyblade's Chosen. Now, however, it was used to help some of their other friends who didn't know how to turn their Keyblades into gliders or have the ability to call on those weapons and move around between the worlds as the need arose.

The Highwind touched down in the middle of town. A door then opened up, and the passengers emerged.

"Man, I've got to ask King Mickey to install more seats in that thing, and that's a fact I've got memorized," the wisecracking Lea said as he stretched himself out; he was wearing a long black coat to ward off the winter chill. "Isa, you and the others are okay, right?" He asked as a man with long blue hair, and an X-shaped scar in between his eyes stepped down from the ship with a glare.

"It's times like this that I miss using the Corridors of Darkness to get around. At least I wasn't cramped that way," the man grumbled.

"You know the rules. No using dark powers on this world. Be sure to get that memorized," the redhead teased his childhood friend while they waited for the other passengers to disembark. As the blond-haired Hayner emerged with his friends, he looked around at their surroundings. "Is this place always so cheerful?"

"I think it's quite beautiful," a brunette said as she exited the ship followed by a chubby kid with black hair. "I bet Pence, and I can get in some great shopping here."

"I'm pretty sure all the shops are closed, Olette," Hayner said. "We're here for a party, remember, and something tells me everyone's going to want to be spending time with their families now."

The group of friends had to make room so that the remaining passengers could exit from the Highwind. As Roxas emerged from within the ship, everyone was reminded about how he and Ven looked exactly alike. To someone unfamiliar with this group of heroes, they would appear to be twins.





"You coming, Xion?" He asked, turning back to the ship.

"Of course, I am," said a girl with short black hair, who was close to Roxas in age. She climbed down from the ship. "This is my first time celebrating Christmas."

"It's your first time, too, Roxas." Lea grinned.

"Something I've got memorized." Roxas grinned at his friend, turning his catchphrase against him. All the pyro fighter could do was smile at his buddy, pride swelling up in his heart. What did he do to earn such a great pal?

Emerging behind Xion was Naminé, who shivered despite wearing a white heavy winter coat and a matching pair of earmuffs over her long blonde hair. "I've drawn so many pictures of this world, and it's so beautiful to see it for myself."

"Seeing a world for oneself is different from reading or learning about it from other means," Isa said as Xion helped her down. "I spent countless hours studying worlds during my time with the Organization, but...."

"But you never even left," Lea teased him. "You were so busy playing supervisor and monitor for the Organization that you never checked out a world for yourself."

"And how do you know that for certain?"

"Because we've been friends since we were kids."

"Things change, Lea."

"Not that much, Isa."

"Okay, we get it." Roxas laughed with some of the others. He had to admit that it felt good to have an honest laugh. When he was with the Organization, he'd been taught that he didn't have a heart because he was a nobody. Even then, though, there had been times when he'd felt like he did have one, despite what he'd been told. These days there was no doubt at all that he had a heart of his own, just like Lea, Isa, Xion, and Naminé. And no one was ever going to separate them again.

While this exchange was going on, someone else had left the Highwind to join the crowd. Like Aqua, this man was a Keyblade Master, as well as being one of the most powerful warriors in the Guardians of Light. Long silver hair gleaming in the glow of the festive lights, he adjusted his yellow and black coat to keep out the cold. "Kairi, come on. Everyone's waiting."

"I'm coming, Riku." With that, Kairi, the last of the ship's passengers, emerged. Riku helped her down to the frosted ground, which had been covered with snow not so long ago. She was dressed in a pink Christmas outfit that complimented her short red hair. Any bystander would've noticed how Xion, Naminé, and Kairi all bore a strong similarity to each other. If they wanted to, they could've passed as sisters. "So, this is Mickey, Donald, and Goofy's home. I wonder if Pluto is here as well?" She said, looking around.


"I'm sure he is," Riku replied. "I know you two went through a lot when the Organization was in power."

"Hey, ancient history," Lea said with a shrug. "Water under the bridge. Now let's just go enjoy... hey!" The pyro's words were cut off as something cold hit him in the back of his head.

Reaching up with a hand, he pulled some snow out of his mess of hair. "Okay, who threw that?!"

A trio of laughter turned the group's attention toward a series of decorations, where three





familiar-looking ducklings held freshly made snowballs. "We got you good!" Dewey said as he threw another snowball, this time hitting Ven on the shoulder.

Ven smiled. "Okay, you asked for it!" Running over to some snow, he made a large snowball and threw it at the ducklings. His pitch went way off course, though, crashing against the side of a building and earning a trio of snickers from the triplets.

"Free for all!" Lea cried out as he grabbed some snow and threw it at Louie. Louie ducked and ran from cover down an alley, with his brothers close on his heels. Most of the Guardians of Light followed after them, smiles breaking out on all of their faces at the fun they were starting to have. The only ones who didn't join in were Isa, Riku, and Naminé.

As the group came out into another plaza, Olette let out a gasp. She'd been pelted by three well-aimed snowballs from the triplets. Taking the initiative, Pence and Hayner grabbed some snow that was lying around and formed them into balls of their own, which they threw back at their attackers. With a laugh, the ducklings managed to dodge them before throwing three more, making the boys shiver as the cold hit them hard.

Grinning from ear to ear, Ven and Roxas moved to help their friends. Ducking behind a bench and mailbox, the two lookalikes made some snowballs and threw them at their opponents. Huey and Louie managed to avoid getting hit while Dewey threw another snowball at them. The two Keyblade bearers managed to dodge the cold missiles, although Ven's arm was grazed by a passing snowball. Preparing to counterattack, Roxas was surprised when he got hit in the back. "Huh? What?"

"Hey. I said it was a free for all, didn't I?" Lea grinned from his spot. "Guess you didn't get that memorized."

"I did, though," Terra said, as he threw a snowball that hit the pyro square in the face. Lea fell backward into a snowbank, and he couldn't help but laugh at the usually serious guy's radical change in attitude. Christmas really was a magical time of the year if he was actually having fun for once.

Laughing all the way, Huey, Dewey, and Louie ran down the street towards the old racetrack where they raced against Terra years ago. Ven and Aqua also had memories of racing on this track, but there was no time to enjoy the trip down memory lane as more snowballs were quickly sent flying their way. The blue-haired mage was forced to throw up a barrier around her friends, as well as herself, in order to avoid the projectiles.

With a giggle, Kairi scooped up some of the snow and formed it into a ball. Taking aim, the Princess of Heart threw it at one of the ducklings, just missing him by a hair – or feather in his case. As she ducked another ball from one of the triplets, she couldn't help but think about someone she wished could be there. "Sora," she quietly said to herself, losing some of the joy that the holiday was supposed to bring.

A bark brought her back to reality. Turning back the way they had come, Kairi saw a familiar yellow dog bounding towards her. "Pluto!" With a smile, she crouched down so that she could hug him. "It's so good to see you again."

"Guess we're reuniting with all sorts of friends today." Lea grinned while the dog gave the Princess a series of welcoming licks to her face, making her laugh.

The three ducklings stopped their icy assault. "He must've come from the castle," Huey noted.





**"That must mean we need to get back there now." Dewey nodded.**

**"Then let's get going!" Louie finished, as Pluto turned and ran back in the direction of the castle. The triplets took off after him, with the rest of the team following behind. They couldn't complain because they were getting in their cardio and keeping themselves warm at the same time.**

**As the team passed through the gates into the castle courtyard, they saw that the topiaries there were also covered with snow. They didn't stay in the gardens for long, as the dog kept on going, leading them through the maze of corridors inside of the castle, and stopping only when he reached the doors which led into the great hall.**

**As the team paused for a moment to catch their breath, what most of them thought was a humongous door turned out to be little more than decoration, as a smaller door opened up in its base. Several walking-broom servants emerged and took their winter coats from them so that they wouldn't be too hot while inside the castle walls. Walking through the small door, they saw that the throne room had been decorated with streamers and garlands of Christmas decorations, and there was a massive tree filling the corner of the room. The room was also filled with a menagerie of anthropomorphic animals that were, in equal measure, both familiar and unfamiliar to many of the Guardians. At the head of them all stood the Queen and her King.**

**"Welcome to Disney Castle, fellow guardians," King Mickey said. "We are so honored to have you here among us. Everyone here has heard of all that you've done to keep our home safe from the forces of darkness, so we decided to thank you by throwing you this special Christmas party. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. Now, enjoy the party!" With that, he summoned his Keyblade, which reminded Kairi of Sora's Kingdom Key except that the blade was colored blue with yellow stars and fired a stream of light from the end, which exploded in a series of lights looking almost like fireworks.**

**The party had officially begun. A band began to play a series of familiar carols, and animals began to pick their partners and lead them onto the dancefloor. Mickey was the first to start dancing with Minnie – of course – and they were followed closely behind by Donald and his sweetheart Daisy. The Guardians of Light began to look at each other with reservations. Sure, they'd been through a lot together, but some of them weren't altogether sure that they were ready for commitment. There had only been two members who had been willing to take that leap, and now they were separated.**

**Minutes passed, and finally, the pressure of wanting to get in on the fun was too much for Xion. She dragged Roxas out onto the dance floor. At first, the former Nobody was reluctant to dance, but he quickly changed his mind as he looked into the beautiful blue eyes of his teammate and friend. Following the example of the animals all around them, Roxas and Xion became the first two in their team to dance.**

**While Riku, Naminé, Terra, and Aqua all eventually worked up the nerve to join in on the dancing, the rest made their way over to the snack table, instead. There, they helped themselves to an assortment of gingerbread cookies and holiday candy. Ven ended up in a conversation with Goofy, while Pence filled his arms with the goodies, earning a warning glare from Olette.**





The only one not to join in the festivities was Kairi.

Seeing everyone smiling and having a good time made her happy, but at the same time, it made her long for her friend. She had tried to help during the Keyblade War, but Xehanort had overpowered her and according to the others, had destroyed her body so that Sora would be forced to clash with him and forge the X-Blade. After the Seeker of Darkness' defeat, her friend had used the Power of Waking to find her heart and bring her back, despite being warned not to.

Leaving the great hall, Kairi retrieved her winter coat so that she could walk in the gardens by herself. She felt like she'd failed her friend, that the reason he was gone was because of her. She'd thought that everything would be okay when the two of them shared the star-shaped papou fruit and bonded their destinies together forever, but now she'd never felt further apart from... no. Sora was more than a friend to her. She knew in her heart that she loved him and that he had loved her in return.

"Sora, I'm sorry," she said, looking up at the stars. "If I'd been stronger, Xehanort wouldn't have used me to get to you. I couldn't help you, and now you can't be here with us. It just doesn't feel like Christmas without you."

As she gazed at the lights in the sky, she wondered how Sora would have responded to her. He'd probably tell her to not blame herself for what had happened, and to enjoy the holiday as if he were there. If she was happy, then he would be happy too. He'd probably make a funny face to try and cheer her up.

"Okay, Sora," she whispered. "I'll try. For you," and with that promise, she turned and went to rejoin the party.





# WHAT CHILD IS THIS? A LONELY GIRL'S CHRISTMAS

BY HANNAH SKIPPER

A frosty beam of winter starlight fell across a small bed that was piled high with warm quilts, and awakened a young girl from a sound sleep; she rose silently and padded across the room to a small window. Pausing briefly, she stared in mute wonder as the massive star's light broke through the dark cloudy sky, then eagerly began working the frozen latch to push aside the last obstacle between herself and her old Christmas friend.

A brief moment of alarm flashed across her face when the wooden window frame scraped against the frozen stone, then she instinctively leaned forward to watch the ice flakes swirl and spin as they made their silent freefall to the ground thousands of feet below. She couldn't help but be amazed by the thousands of ice crystals that coated her tower, making it sparkle like a million gemstones. Shifting her gaze upward again, she cautiously clambered up onto the ledge to let her slippered feet dangle over the side. Suddenly, a tiny chameleon appeared in her lap, and she almost laughed out loud in delighted surprise.

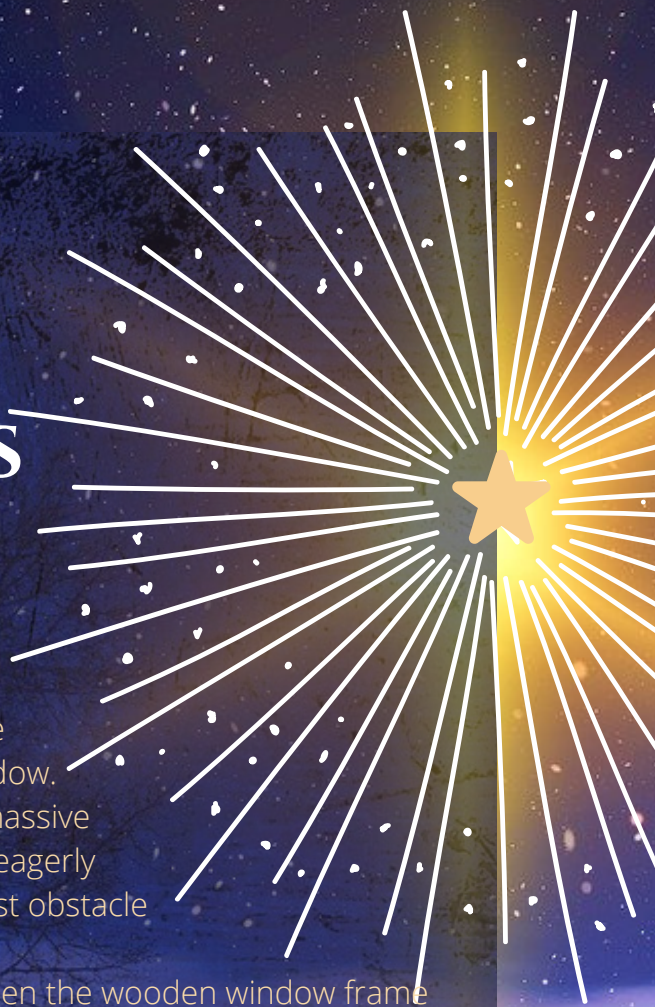
"Pascal," she whispered in hushed glee, lifting him up to give him a snuggle and a peck on the top of his head, "we mustn't wake mother. You know how she hates that, but thank you for coming. Merry Christmas."

"Look, it's my star," she continued, pointing upward. "It comes every Christmas, so I think it's meant for me –just like the lights on my birthday."

Leaning back against the stones, she sighed contentedly, feeling happy, loved, and warm, despite the freezing temperature, with her friend beside her and her star watching over her. She closed her eyes.

"Rapunzel!" Mother Gothel's voice sang out, "Oh, Rapunzel! Where are you?"

The girl's eyes flew open and, disoriented, she laid a hand on the cold stone to steady herself for a moment, before remembering where she was and why she was there. It seemed as if it had only been a few minutes since she'd drifted off, but already the sun was rising over the dark evergreen forest, and both window and stone were damp with





melting icicles. Anxious not to let her mother catch her breaking the rules by hanging out of the window, and excited to celebrate the day, Rapunzel shoved her damp hair aside and leaped off her perch.

"Merry Christmas, Mother!" She yelped, catching her balance just before she tripped over her long locks.

Gothel appeared a moment later. "You've been sitting on the windowsill again, haven't you?" she accused, her face instantly paling with rage.

Rapunzel giggled nervously, "Who, me? What makes you say that?"

"Your nightgown and hair are wet," Gothel snapped, narrowing her eyes. Throwing up her hands, she stormed forward and flung a small purple dress at the little girl. "Honestly, Rapunzel, I just don't understand why you can't follow the rules. You know I'm just trying to protect you! And on Christmas, of all days. I would have thought you could at least try to be more considerate...."

"I'm sorry, mother," the little girl's face fell, and she scrambled to change clothes, "but I...."

"Rapunzel," Gothel instantly interrupted, "how many times do I need to remind you? You can't apologize and then say, but! Honestly, what am I going to do with you? If I wasn't here, I just don't know what would happen to you. And haven't I always told you what they'll do to you if they see you? Those people out there! My dear, I'm only trying to protect you, and then you go and break mommy's heart." She swept her daughter into a tight embrace. "But what can I do? I love you!"

"I know, I know, Mother, I know." Rapunzel wormed her way to freedom, her mind still on celebration. "I really am sorry. I'll try to do better. Really, I will. What can I do to make it up to you? I'll do anything. You name it. I'll do it. Just say the word, I'll...."

"Oh, stop that racket!" Gothel snapped, rolling her eyes as she flounced back towards the staircase. "You know I can't stand it when you prattle on and on and on like that!" She sighed, "Alright, dear, no more talk for now." She turned around about halfway down the staircase to watch the little girl trudging after her. When she spoke again, her tone was utterly different. "Mommy needs to feel refreshed... then we'll open your presents."

Squealing with delight, Rapunzel dashed past her mother, skipping and bouncing all the way down the long staircase. Quickly setting up two chairs, she grabbed her hairbrush and was seated and waiting by the time Gothel came up to her.

"That's better," the woman almost sneered as she sat down and began to comb her daughter's





lush blonde locks.

"Flower, gleam and glow," Rapunzel sang softly, her wide eyes already roaming around the room. She quickly spied several brightly wrapped packages tucked into obvious hiding places, and the tempo of her voice noticeably picked up. "Let your power shine. Make the clock reverse."

"Rapunzel!" Gothel snapped sharply, gritting her teeth as she cut her daughter a hard look and brushed furiously.

"Bring back what once was mine," the little girl's voice steadied for a moment, but quickly picked up speed again. "Heal what has been hurt. Change the Fate's design."

"Rapunzel!"

"Save what has been lost." Rapunzel swallowed her excitement again and, with difficulty, managed to finish steadily, "Bring back what once was mine. What once was mine."

"Now presents!" she squealed, bouncing to her feet.

"Well, actually..." Gothel caught her arm, spinning the girl's body around. She rolled her eyes in her daughter's face. "I think you ought to bring us some breakfast first." Sighing again, she shook her head hopelessly. "Honestly, I don't know what you'd do if I wasn't here. You'd probably waste away to nothing. Imagine – presents before breakfast – wherever did you get such a ridiculous idea?" She swept the little girl into her arms. "But I love you so much. I just can't let anything happen to you. Oh, do you even know how much I love you?"

"Of course, I know, Mother." Rapunzel bit her lip and wormed her way to freedom again. Then she obediently scampered off to the kitchen. "Breakfast, coming right up!"

With the brisk efficiency of lots of practice, she scraped together the kind of spartan meal that would please her self-conscious mother, returning with a tray of oatmeal, fruit, and hot green tea.

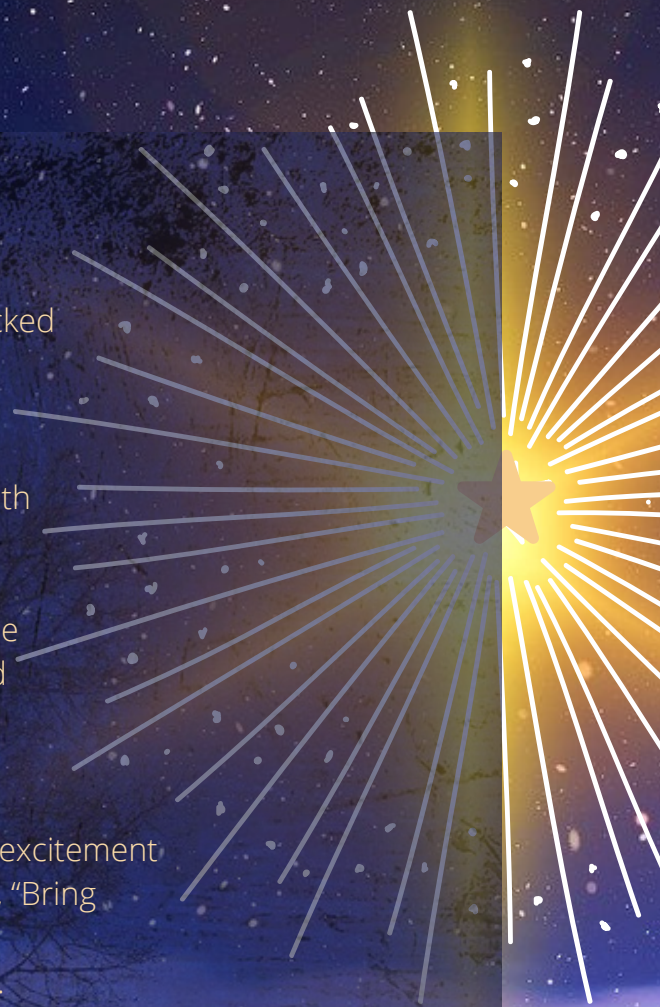
"Now, Rapunzel," Gothel resumed her lecture, barely glancing at her plate as she watched the girl excitedly wolfing down her own portion, "as you know, today is Christmas."

"Yes, I know!" Rapunzel's eyes danced with delight, "And I'm so excited, mother! I bet you'll never guess what I made for you!"

"And you do remember what people do on Christmas, don't you?" Gothel's voice rose an octave.

The little girl instantly quelled. "Th-they come into the woods to-to decorate a Christmas tree...."

Gothel snorted, rolling her eyes again,





dismissing the answer with a flip of her hand. "Please, Rapunzel, they pretend to decorate a tree. But they are really looking for you, my dear! They want your hair! How many times must I remind you? Oh, Rapunzel, you're so foolish. But I love you so much. Oh, I just don't know what would happen to you if I wasn't here!"

"I-I-I understand," the girl stammered, biting her lip to keep her tears at bay, figuring her mother was still angry about last night. "And I really am sorry about last night. I know I could have been seen, even in the dark, and I... I'm so sorry!"

"There's a good girl," Gothel cooed, looking pleased with herself. "I know you don't do these things on purpose, but you just don't know how to control yourself. Oh, Rapunzel, you're so naive. But that's why you must always stay with me. I will always protect you, my dear." She sighed again. "Now, clean up the table, and then you can find your presents."

"Ooh, presents! Yes!" Rapunzel's face lit up, her joy instantly returning as she scooted off with the dirty plates, bowls, cups, and utensils. Looking back, she squealed, "Just wait until you see what I made for you! I've spent the last few months working on it!"

"Oh, you're so funny, Rapunzel!" Gothel threw back her head and laughed. "You know you don't need to get me anything. Having you here with me is all I need."

"All the same," the girl reappeared a few minutes later with a happy sparkle in her eyes, wiping her damp hands on her dress, "I wanted to do something special for you, Mother."

Gothel laughed again, then waved her away. "Presents, my dear, remember your presents are waiting."

Rapunzel glowed as she tore around the room to collect the gifts that she'd seen earlier, then she hurried back to open them at her mother's feet. "Ooh, more paints!" she cried, ripping the wrapping paper off the first gift, "I've been needing them!"

"Another dress!" she exclaimed with delight at the second, "Ooo, it's my favorite color too!" But when she opened the last gift, her breath caught, and her eyes grew as big as saucers. "And-and a telescope!" She jumped up and threw her arms around Gothel. "Thank you, Mother!"

"I know how much you like to track the stars," Gothel shrugged demurely, pushing the little girl away. "Now, get away. You'll wrinkle my dress. How many times must I remind you about personal space, Rapunzel?"

"I-I don't know what to say," the little girl groped for the proper words as she sank back to the





carpet, recognizing how unlikely it was for her mother to give her such a thing. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Gothel beamed smugly, her smile tainted with a twinge of superiority. "Now I believe you were excited to give me something?"

"Oh, right!" Rapunzel's face lit up. She jumped up and scampered back up the staircase, her long hair bouncing behind her, calling, "I hid it under my bed!" Reappearing several minutes later, struggling with an awkwardly large box, she tottered and swayed all the way down the staircase to set it at her mother's feet with a plunk.

"Here it is!" she announced, excitedly bouncing up and down in place.

Gothel dutifully pulled off the wrapping paper, lifted the lid, and pulled out a simple red dress.

"I put it in this big box so you wouldn't be able to guess what it was before you opened it." Rapunzel giggled at her own cleverness.

But Gothel didn't respond; she was giving the dress a critical once over and just looked increasingly annoyed. Then she spied something else tucked into the corner of the box and reached in to retrieve a beautiful wood carving of a flower, painted yellow with a purple center, just like the one that had made Rapunzel's hair magical.

"Really, Rapunzel?" she snipped, her face flaming as she turned her attention back to the dress. "It's so drab and, ugh, this fabric is so coarse! How awful. And do you really think I'll fit into it? I'd be ashamed to wear something so huge. It's insulting, dear. Honestly, I just don't know why you do these things after mommy has loved you so much." Glancing back at the wood carving, she sneered, "And what is this? A doorstep? Do you want me to trip every time I come into your room?"

Making a face, she quickly flung it away. The delicate petals and leaves easily snapped off when it hit the stone wall, and Gothel turned back to glare at her daughter, "Now, look at the mess you've caused! And after I went to all that trouble to get you a telescope too! Well, I expect you to clean it up before I get back! You did remember that I'm going out this afternoon, didn't you? Honestly, Rapunzel, I just don't know what to do with you sometimes, but I love you so much I just put up with it."

Her daughter barely heard her. As the tears welled up in her eyes, Rapunzel whirled away and ran all the way back to her bedroom. Flinging herself down on her comforter, she sobbed uncontrollably until she fell asleep.

Some hours later, she was awakened by the happy chirping of little songbirds fluttering outside of her window, and she groggily lifted her stuffed-up head to see them pecking the window. Her mother's cruel words came back like a battering ram,





distracting her for a minute, but the birds were insistent, and they finally pulled her back to the present.

"Oh!" she yelped softly as joy suddenly lit her tearstained face, "I almost forgot!" Instantly, her feet hit the floor, and she scooted on tiptoes all the way down to the kitchen, ever on the lookout for her mother. But Gothel was nowhere to be seen, and Rapunzel snatched a sack of bread crumbs out of their hiding place and raced back upstairs.

Cautiously creeping up to the window, she peeked outside to make sure the coast was clear, then flung a handful of crumbs into the air. The little birds sailed up to meet it, swirling, spinning, dipping, diving, and rolling in a kaleidoscope of reds, greens, yellows, purples, oranges, blues, browns, blacks, and whites, then sank downward towards the dry, frosted earth, following the crumbs as they fell. Rapunzel tossed another handful, and they rose and fell again like a colorful quilt riding the currents of the wind. Tossing a third handful, the young girl finally began to giggle, forgetting her mother's cruelty and feeling free to take delight in the acrobatic show that her little friends were putting on. Suddenly she was laughing hysterically and tossing out handful after handful in delirious glee. She didn't know where her mother was, and she didn't care – all she knew was that she was alone, her friends were happy, and she was happy.

But it didn't last. Answering laughter deep within the forest reached her ears and set her on high alert. It seemed as wildly reckless and happy as her own laughter, and she jerked away from the open window in terror. Soon more voices could be heard, coming closer and closer to her hiding place, and her heart rammed against her ribs in fear.

The townspeople were coming!

But where was her mother, she wondered. Surely, she would come to keep her safe? Surely, she wasn't so upset about this morning that she wouldn't come now when Rapunzel needed her protection the most? "Mother...?" she whimpered softly, then clamped her mouth shut for fear of being heard. She backed away from the window and called again, more frantically, "Mother? Where are you?"

But she couldn't ignore the happy sounds outside, and somehow curiosity ebbed away her fear. She crept back to the window and peered over the ledge – like an alligator in a lake, with only the very top of her head visible – to behold the once-a-year sight of children and adults decorating a nearby evergreen.

They hung colorful ornaments, lights, garlands, and even little edibles for the woodland





creatures – all the while singing beautifully festive carols and hymns. None of them seemed to notice the tower at the edge of the clearing, let alone that the window was open and the tiny blonde girl who was watching them. Suddenly, a young boy took off running with other children in hot pursuit. They laughed and squealed as they chased each other, running figure-eights through the snow around their parents and neighbors, in an energetic game of tag. Laughing, some of the adults joined in, and their audience of one thought the game was ten times more exciting than when it had been only the children playing. Someone brought out a big red ball, and it didn't take long for a kickball game to ensue. Around and around the children flew, kicking up snow flurries as they raced between the tall stately trees that marked the bases, as the adults cheered them on. Rapunzel watched all of this with puzzlement, unease, and longing. It looked like so much fun, she wished that she could run down the stairs, fling open the door, and be a part of it all. She wished that she and her mother could have that same kind of fun together.

Why can't Mother and I do something like that? She wondered – bravely entertaining the notion with relish for a moment. We could make an obstacle course right here inside the tower, and I could use my hair to wing through it. She almost squealed with glee before catching herself. Her eyes widened with reproach. Who was she kidding? Mother would never....

Maybe mother is right? She scolded herself silently, reaching up to finger her one short, dark strand of hair that had been cut and had lost its power as a result. I don't know what I'm doing! She continued on her harsh inner monologue. What was I thinking? ...Wanting to go out there where they only want my hair, when I'm safe here, and Mother loves me and protects me.

Turning away from the window with a sigh, she scrubbed the tears from her eyes. Who was she kidding? It was too dangerous for her out there. Those people were wonderful with their own children, but if they ever saw her and her hair, they'd probably turn into greedy pigs just like her mother had always said they would.

Resigning herself to her fate, she turned away from the window and slowly headed downstairs. But she skidded to a stop about halfway down, horrified by the sight of her spoiled wooden-carving still lying on the floor. She almost turned back, unwilling to face the tragedy that had befallen her months of painstaking work.

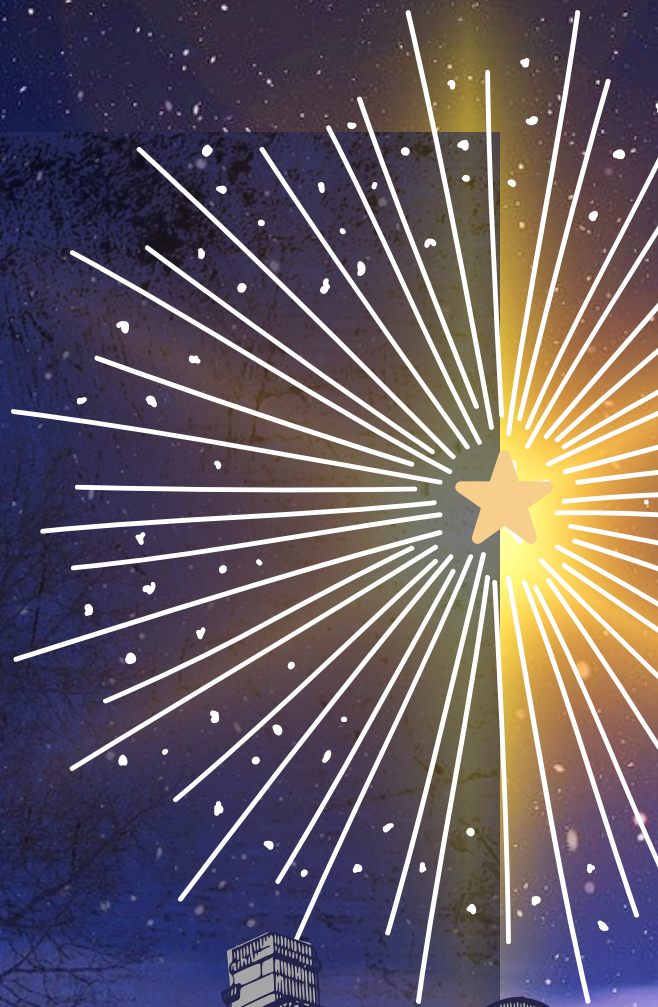
"I expect you to clean this up before I get





back!" Gothel's harsh words rang in her mind, grounding her retreat to a halt before it began. So, instead of running, she hurried to grab a broom so that she could get the hated chore done as quickly as possible. Deliberately trying not to think about all of the hours that it had taken her to make the little ornament, she swept and let her mind wander back to the night before. Instantly, the Christmas star leaped brightly into her mind's eye, and she suddenly felt as if someone was really watching over her again. Then she considered the people outside, and the old ache of longing returned.

"What is it like, out there where they play?" she sang miserably, choking back tears when she accidentally let her mind register her ruined work on the floor. "I'll just keep wonderin' and wonderin' and wonderin' and wonderin'...."







# Robin Hood Collection

By  
Avellina  
Balestri





# So Dear to My Heart: An Animal Lover's Disney Classic

By J. M.



So Dear to My Heart is a Walt Disney classic that is less well known than it probably should be. Produced in 1948, it combines the best of Disney mediums – animation, and live-action – with a heartfelt storyline, that is sure to be a warm, nostalgic journey to simpler times.

It is based on the 1943 Sterling North book *Midnight and Jeremiah*, which was later revised by the author, to parallel with the movie, and re-released under the film title. It is a beautiful tale about the meaning of faith, hope, and familial love, and remains a golden nugget in the treasure chest of Disney's golden age.

We follow the story of young Jeremiah Kinkaid, a farm boy growing up in the American mid-west (Indiana) in 1903. After a passing train stops off with a famed racing horse, Dan Patch (the real horse which portrayed himself in the film), his initial dream becomes owning just such a horse and winning prize ribbons in competition.

But his dream shifts after the birth of a black wool lamb whose mother rejects him. Jeremiah bolts indoors with the lamb and pleads with his Granny to let him save its life, and he promises to take good care of him, while not neglecting his chores. Granny, a tough cookie with a tender heart, ultimately relents and agrees to give him a chance but doesn't promise that he can keep the lamb – concerned that it will be underfoot and cause trouble.

He comes to name his black sheep "Danny," after the racehorse Dan Patch. Jeremiah determines to raise him to be a prize-winning sheep so that he can enter him in the Pike County Fair. But Granny is none too keen on the expense of attending the fair, especially since Danny has a habit of racking up damage costs running 'wreck-loose' and 'ram-shod'



through the house and yard (not to mention an incident in the general store)!

But, determined to persevere, and with the encouragement of his mentoring Uncle, Hiram, Jeremiah strives to earn the money himself. He decides to track down a bee tree with his supportive cousin, Tildy, and sell the honey they discover to the local grocer. But he will have to overcome the even greater obstacle of Danny's disappearance, and the crisis of faith which results from it.

The actors are perfectly suited to their roles, especially Bobby Driscoll in the part of Jeremiah, and Beulah Bondi (famous for her role as George Bailey's mother in "It's a Wonderful Life") as Granny. They bring a familial warmth and connectivity to the screen.

Burl Ives clinches his part as Uncle Hiram – always striving to smooth out relations between 'set-in-her-ways' Granny and her adventurous grandkids. He is also perfect for musical interludes, in Alan a' Dale fashion, telling us how the saga of Jeremiah is shaping up.

Ives performs an adaptation of the 17th century English folk song "Lavender Blue" on his guitar, which resulted in the film being nominated for an academy award for best original song. He also plays another English folk song, "Where Have You Been, Billy Boy?"

There are also the delightful animated numbers "Its Whatcha Do With Whatcha Got" and "Stick-to-it-ivity." These include some of the most memorable moments of the film, with delightful cartoon retellings of the story of Christopher Columbus and Robert de Bruce – complete with a dancing, kilt-clad spider!

The charm of the film comes from the simple yet timeless moral lessons within. While the little black sheep, Danny, might not have "pedigree," what makes him special is the love and hard work that goes into making him a prized sheep. This is true of anything: we can take the ordinary and turn it into the extraordinary by the love and effort that we put into it.

"You do the best with what you've got."

But a greater lesson still, is the essence of love itself, which is self-giving – not looking for glory as its own end, but rather for the welfare of those you love. It is the ultimate willingness of Jeremiah to give up his dreams for the welfare of Danny (without spoiling too much!), that proves his true love of the lamb that he saved.

He also came to have a deeper understanding of faith and trust in God through this willingness to sacrifice. This is a testament to Granny's love for her grandson, instilling him with a virtuous upbringing, and one which can be summed up through the quote from St. Paul in Corinthians 13:4-7:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."







# Gurgi

By *Charlotte Sandoval*

The creature called Gurgi let out a pitiful moan, burying his face in the dirt, rear in the air.

“Workings and groanings for poor Gurgi,” came the muffled complaint, “Only workings and groanings.”

All around him, the sheep he was meant to be tending continued to eat their grassy lunch, unphased by the tantrum. The lack of a receptive audience only caused louder wailing as he raised his head and realized that they were paying his agony not the least amount of mind.

“Wicked, wicked old man!” he sniffled, wiping his nose with a hairy arm and scowling in the direction the farm, way down the hill. He imagined Dalben sitting down to a feast and chuckling to himself as he ate, delighted not to have to share the munchings and crunchings.

There was no doubt in the little creature’s mind that this was the reason he’d been sent out here, with only one, teeny, measly sack of food.

Gurgi licked his fingers in search of one last pie crumb and sighed deeply. He patted his stomach as if that might comfort its desperate rumbling. Dalben had tried to persuade him that, sometimes, stomachs made noise when one had eaten too much – Gurgi remained unconvinced.

“Oh poor, poor Gurgi. Great lords is sent to do whackings, and smackings, and smiting, while Gurgi must watch the fat woolys all alone.”

He scrunched up his face, forcing out a single tear at the thought of his friends, off fighting monsters and dining nightly in great, fancy halls with other mighty princes.

“Great hero, they calls Gurgi. But no munchings and crunchings for great hero. No. Only sheepings and workings.”

Shaking his head, he paced around and around the perimeter of the sheep, furry hands clasped behind his back as he lamented his fate. Dalben had insisted on keeping the little creature close-by, as Taran, Eilonwy, and Fflewddur Fflam, all left on another great adventure to save the land of Prydain, their home. Dalben would not explain his reasons behind the decision, save to say that Gurgi was meant for a different path.

Gurgi scowled, picking up a stray stick and whacking at the grass.

Unable to keep his naturally cheerful mood down for long, he began dancing around, laughing, as the stick became a sword, and the tall grass transformed into easily-slayed mighty beasts.

Finally, out of breath, he raised the stick high, proclaiming, “Yes! Oh, yes! Mighty hero Gurgi will go on his own questings and lookings. Yes! Gurgi will do searchings for crunchings!”

Without another glance back at the peaceful sheep, he bounded off for the woods, stick in hand, ears flopping madly.

For several long minutes, he was so taken up with slaying trees and stabbing unsuspecting bushes that he very nearly forgot his hunger.





It was only when a furious, chattering squirrel, upset by his ramblings, threw an acorn at his head, that he was reminded of it.

Gurgi flopped to the leafy forest floor, rubbing his sore head with his free hand and stuffing the acorn into his cheek with the other. It only helped comfort him a little. The truth was, he missed his friends. They had been gone for many, many weeks now. He worried that, without him, they would get into all sorts of trouble. What would they do without him, who had saved them from the Cauldron born? Taran, especially, he thought, was very good at getting into danger. But not so good at getting out of it again.

Finally, remembering the sheep, Gurgi rose reluctantly and picked up his stick, dragging it behind him as he began the trek back to the meadow.

Passing a giant, gnarled old trunk, a sound reached his ears that made him pause. A strange, musical sort of hum that reminded him faintly of – something. He wasn't sure what.

Curious, Gurgi scampered his way over, sniffing and looking for the source.

"A friend for Gurgi?" he wondered out loud, suddenly hopeful – huffing and puffing as he struggled to climb over the ancient trunk. Seeing nothing in the bare branches, he let himself slide down to the ground on the other side.

For an instant, nothing happened. Then, before he could leap clear, the soil gave way beneath his feet, sending him down, down, into the dark depths of the earth. At least, it seemed to him to be a very long way down.

Gurgi landed at the bottom in a heap of fur and moans.

"Oh! Oh, poor, poor Gurgi's head is all bruising and ouchings," he complained.

"Acorns and tumbles. Not good for Gurgi's head."

To make matters worse, he had lost his stick in the fall. Now he would need to find another when he found his way back up to the forest, and that was a lot of work. He'd liked that stick.

The humming began again in earnest. Seeing no other option, Gurgi felt his way forward in the pitch darkness. Cobwebs clung to his fur. The stench of mold and long-dead things attacked his nose.

Still he pressed on, until, quite suddenly, he found himself in a large, dimly-lit cave.

The light, he saw, came from blue crystals lined all along the walls and high ceiling above. He bit one, just in case, but it was too hard even for his strong teeth.

Disappointed, but not discouraged, he moved on.

There was a raised platform in the center of the cavern, and Gurgi was almost sure that this had to be where the hum was coming from. He was not in the least bit frightened by the skeletons all around the base. He had fought far more terrifying foes on the way to defeat the Horned King. Not to mention the King himself. Besides, these did nothing to stop him from climbing the platform, so what was there to fear?

At the top, Gurgi saw that he stood at the feet of yet another skeleton. This one was very tall, with arms folded over his chest, and a crown on his skull. A gleaming sword lay flat on his stomach.

"Pokings, and proddings, and long-dead kings," Gurgi grumbled, "But still no munchings or crunchings."

The hum was louder now. By the dead man's head, there was a sack. Gurgi pounced, digging through it with great enthusiasm. Gold coins and precious gems flew out to litter the stone floor. They were of no interest to him. He could not eat them or use them to get out. Nor could they keep him warm in the chill, damp air.







He let out a happy cry as he pulled out a glowing sphere from the very depths of the bag. This was the source of the humming. It vibrated in his palm.

He bit it, shook it, dropped it, but it remained unchanged when he cradled it, once more, in his hands. No matter. He liked the hum, and how warm it felt against his fur.

Gurgi was no fool. He knew a thing of magic when he saw it. This was much like Princess Eilonwy's bauble. Two baubles could be no bad thing, surely. He would give it to her when she returned from her great adventures.

"Lights and brights for pretty princess. Oho, yes, Gurgi will show her magic," he cackled, very pleased indeed with himself. As he spoke, the most delicious smell came to tickle his nostrils. His stomach gave a mighty rumbling.

He closed his eyes, letting the scent guide him. His mother had always taught him to follow his nose. It had never led him wrong in his life. If anything, he was only here now because of his nose. He had followed it to the apple in Taran's pocket, and that had been a delicious munching before Taran demanded it back.

And was that a sigh, from the long-dead king, or merely a cold breeze, blowing from God knew where? Gurgi shivered. He shut his eyes tighter, walked faster. It didn't matter. He had the bauble, and he was following his nose.

The furry thief forgot his fear instantly, as sunlight tickled his eyelids. He opened his eyes to find himself near the edge of the woods, close to where he had left the sheep. In the dimming light of day, the bauble seemed to glow less brightly, the hum fading. Gurgi shaded his eyes, looking down at the little farmhouse of *Caer Dalben*. Were those horses he saw? And someone waving? A shrill shriek of joy escaped him. He leaped high in the air, dropping the bauble in his haste. Taran had returned! So focused was he, that he never saw how dark the forest had become, behind him. He did not see the skeletal hand that reached down and plucked the glowing sphere from the grass. All of that – that was an adventure for another time. Because for now, Gurgi was happy. And that was all that mattered.





# Credits

**COVER ART BY BYRNWIGA  
INTERIOR GRAPHICS BY BETH AMOS**

## Upcoming Issue Spring 2020

*In the new year, Fellowship and Fairydust will be moving over to publishing three seasonal issues per year, instead of the previous four themed issues which we have been running to date.*

*With this new change, we will be focusing on bringing our readers a selection of the 'best of' submissions from each four-month time period.*

*All submissions sent to Fellowship and Fairydust will be considered for inclusion, but any which don't get selected for the seasonal issues will still be published on the magazine's blog page, as usual.*

*The next issue will be our Spring Seasonal Issue and if you would like your work to be considered for inclusion then the submission deadline is 5th March with a publication date of 5th April.*

*We are looking for non-fiction, fan-fiction, original fiction, poetry, literary & media analysis, artwork/photography on any topic, as long as each piece subscribes to our submission guidelines - which can be found on our website;*

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**...AND, AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU FOR READING!**