

Fairy Tales in Film

Hi All,

I haven't seen this film from the director of "Run Lola Run" but I'm bouncing this review on because the film sounds as if it's a modern and very weird version of "Sleeping Beauty" If you've read my book [Screenwriting Updated](#), you'll remember I suggest using fairy tales as story triggers that can take you into weird and wonderful territory - so that "Being John Malkovich" is actually Jack and the Beanstalk with the portal leading into the Giant's territory instead of a beanstalk. I'm just wondering what "Sleeping Beauty" is a metaphor for. Self discovery? Sexual awakening? Defeating death and awaking in a new identity? Interesting.

Fairy tales are always worth considering as story triggers because they always deal with some perennial human concern (probably why they've lasted). So that Jack and the Beanstalk is "the interloper in the corridors of power", The Three Little Pigs is a serial killer scenario. etc etc

Which reminds me: tip if you're stuck on where to take a plot or are unsure what you are actually writing about. See which fairy tale(s) the story resembles, then follow the fairy tale plot. Apologies to all who already know this.

Subject: NYTimes.com Article: 'The Princess and the Warrior': The Fairy Tale as Surreal Brainteaser

'The Princess and the Warrior': The Fairy Tale as Surreal Brainteaser
MOVIE REVIEW By STEPHEN HOLDEN

Tom Tykwer's mathematically elegant film "The Princess and the Warrior" hangs a heavy load of metaphysical baggage on the story of a nurse in a mental hospital whose life is miraculously saved by a criminal on the lam. Shy, beautiful Sissi (Franka Potente), while wending her way to the bank one afternoon on the streets of Wuppertal, is hit by a truck. As it turns out, Bodo (Benno Fürmann), the handsome stranger who saves her, has been planning to rob the same bank that was her destination.

Ducking under the vehicle, he discovers Sissi unable to breathe, punctures her throat and, with an improvised tube, infuses her with oxygen just as she is about to suffocate. This heart-stopping sequence, filmed from Sissi's point of view, goes about as far as any movie could in capturing the suspended, eerily silent stop-time of a desperate life-and-death moment.

It's little wonder that Sissi, unable to speak and gazing desperately into Bodo's eyes, sees him not only as her potential savior but also as her romantic destiny should she survive. As this metaphysical fairy tale reiterates, as if setting out to prove an elaborate equation, her intuition is correct. Before the movie is over, the coincidences surrounding Bodo's appearance in her life have multiplied into an extraordinary chain of connection involving everyone from the mental patients Sissi cares for to the friend who sent her a letter with instructions to be followed once she reached

the bank.

Deeply whimsical beneath its poker face, "The Princess and the Warrior" has the structure of an elaborate mind-teasing puzzle. As it widens its circles of connection, it supposes that a force that could only be called destiny is determining the characters' lives.

Around this central premise, the film spins other, weirder notions. What if your worst nightmare drifted into someone else's mind and incited an act of violence? Might your most excruciating personal trauma be a contagious infection that you caught from someone else? What special knowledge do the clinically insane have of such crossed mental wiring and its relation to fate? When tracking down Bodo, who disappears immediately after the accident, Sissi cajoles one of her patients to sniff out the route Bodo took before discovering her.

Chance and coincidence, of course, are big themes that have obsessed other directors in recent years, most notably the Polish maestro Krzysztof Kieslowski and the Canadian Atom Egoyan. But where Kieslowski's profoundly humanistic films debated the existence of God and Mr. Egoyan's movies intuit a mysterious, often tragic element of fate at work in human affairs, Mr. Tykwer's coolly crafted films bespeak a certain icy detachment. For all their structural rigor, they feel more like elaborate guessing games than impassioned philosophic inquiries.

"The Princess and the Warrior" is a thematic hybrid of the German director's two previous films, the peppy art-house hit "Run Lola Run" and the sober, downbeat "Winter Sleepers." In many ways, the new movie is a dreamy, slow-motion rerun of "Lola," a witty, pumped-up sequence of what-if's that offered different variations on a young woman's desperate race against time. But where "Lola" was all breathless speed and colliding surfaces, "The Princess and the Warrior," which runs more than two hours, is languorously surreal.

Until chance throws them together, Sissi and Bodo are unhappy loners locked inside themselves. Sissi sublimates her desires by devoting such intense personal care to her patients that she crosses professional boundaries and has guarded sexual contact with one wildly adoring, frighteningly possessive man. Bodo, who lost his wife in an explosion outside a gas station while he was in the restroom, has given up on love. And when Sissi visits him after her recovery, he throws her bodily out of the cottage he shares with his older brother and partner in crime.

The movie toys with the notion that Sissi and Bodo are not all that dissimilar from her patients, and the scenes of group therapy in the sterile institution have an undertone of menace. When Sissi

hides Bodo in the institution after his robbery goes awry, he blends in among the inmates almost effortlessly. Ms. Potente and Mr. Fürmann make a sullenly attractive couple. When the camera isn't scouring their faces as if searching for an entry into their souls, it is circling around them voyeuristically.

Despite its storytelling skill and shimmering visual polish, "The Princess and the Warrior" is a curiously dispassionate film. Glumly sober but lacking in emotional and moral weight, it often feels like a speculative work of science fiction. At the same time, anyone who has narrowly escaped being struck by a speeding car and thanked Heaven for being spared should be intrigued by the movie's fascination with fate and tickled by its suggestion that life can sometimes provide a fairy-tale ending. Just don't expect "The Princess and the Warrior" to warm your heart.

"The Princess and the Warrior" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). It has sexual situations and some violence.

THE PRINCESS AND THE WARRIOR

Written (in German, with English subtitles) and directed by Tom Tykwer; director of photography, Frank Griebe; edited by Mathilde Bonnefoy; music by Mr. Tykwer, Johnny Kilmek and Reinhold Heil; produced by Stefan Arndt and Maria Köpf; released by Sony Pictures Classics. Running time: 130 minutes. This film is rated R.

WITH: Franka Potente (Sissi), Benno Fürmann (Bodo), Joachim Krol (Walter), Marita Breuer (Sissi's mother) and Jürgen Tarrach (Schmatt).