

DISNEY MOVIES MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL

"The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all," — The Emperor, *Mulan*.

"Death is the only adventure you have left!" — Captain Hook, *Peter Pan*.

Through its series of movies Disney has showed us both sides of the picture. Whether you are 2 or 20, at one point of your life you have watched Disney movies; maybe you have watched Disney movies all your life regardless of your age, and even now chances are if you put a 20 year old in front of the television to watch *Peter Pan*, he might just turn as giddy as a schoolboy!

We all know who Mickey Mouse is, who the Fairy Godmother is and we always will; they hold that special place in our hearts that can never be removed. As we grew, we watched the movies grow with us, from *The Snow Queen* to *Frozen* and from *Sleeping Beauty* to *Maleficent*— they have gone through changes just as our perceptions have. Even though at one time we might have seen them all as a "prince saves princess in distress" somewhere along the way our views and thoughts towards the movies and the characters have developed.

Disney movies are inspirational; they make us dream of fairy tales and charming princes; they make us enter a world of magic, take us on a ride down memory lane giving us a break from reality. As a child, most of us loved the idea of playing a princess being rescued by prince charming or a prince in a gallant white horse going to save the damsel in distress, but with time that

changed. Today, most of us realise girls are more than studded heels and shimmery ball gowns and boys are more than just award winning smiles, dapper capes and equestrian skills; that girls can play their own knight in shining armour and empower themselves without having a male lead by their side and most importantly they do not always sing and dance in gardens.

The new versions of the original movies seem to sway away from the previous gender biased roles and display a glimpse of reality amongst all the magic and fairies. In *Tangled*, we love how Rapunzel followed her passions in whatever way she could which showed other women that they can pave their way by themselves even if it seems scary. As children, we loved the concept of *The Snow Queen*, but now we love the modified version where *Frozen* shows that true love is not bound to "royal pairs", and that love between siblings can far surpass romance. We relate to it and we love it probably more than we would have loved this version as a child. While we adored *Sleeping Beauty* as a child and dreamt of prince charming saving us, as we grew we got to understand the other sides of it. *Maleficent* shows exactly that side: how evil is made and not born and as grown-ups that made a lot more sense than just a princess in a tower. For some it has nothing to do with the movies themselves as with age they just tend to not go for animated movies anymore. While for others, they see meaning and depth in the same movies which they



once saw as nothing but silly songs and hilarious sidekicks.

No longer do the movies go out of their way to paint characters black and white and stereotypes seem to be fading fast. We now see what we didn't before that Disney should be focusing less on princesses needing to be saved, handsome princes and more on reality.

In the wise words of Walt Disney — "it is the job of story-tellers such as Disney to restore order with imagination...and instill hope — again and again and again." We might have lost hope with our favourite Disney movies amidst growing up, complaining about gender discrimination and portraying unrealistic expectations of love,

but till this day Disney has not failed to surprise us with its modifications on love and reality to help us connect and fall in love with it again.

No matter what Disney movies will always take us back to fantasy land where we can all share some good memories and spend some quality family time; it can be argued that the same movies we saw as children seem different now in the sense of depicting impractical morals and always ending with a happily ever after, but as our views have changed, a change in moves are also on their way. We learned from movies like *Frozen* and *Brave* that happily ever afters do always come, just not in the same content.

By Anisha Hassan

The leaves came tumbling down

A gold maple leaf parted with its mother and glided down in a dancing motion to join its brethren on the ground; they all congregated at the base of their mother's trunk, as if waiting for something big and important to unravel.

The desiccated leaves skirted around their mother, forming a yellow-brown crunchy blanket that rustled every time the wind blew. An unruly gust would sometimes, however, disrupt this sombre congregation. The gust would send them in disarray. And when it did, the leaves rolled all over the grass, hitting stones, trunks of other trees, cars and even young joggers' running shoes.

On those occasions, the shrivelled leaves reminisced about the days when they were young, green and bursting with vigour — the time when they lived close to the boundless sky, not on the soggy ground of autumn.

The mother maple, which was green and strong even a month ago, was fading and growing frail. She seemed to be getting old faster than she should, adding five years to her age every passing day.

Although you could still spot some strokes of lustreless green here and there, her once iridescent leaves were now mostly bronze, mustard, cider, butterscotch or medallion, a colour palette that was a gift to her from Great Mother Nature.

But there was a time not too long ago when through her dense green leaves, I could hardly catch a sight of the lapis lazuli dome of the sky on a sunny afternoon, or the thin river that flowed through the public park behind her. With the arrival of autumn, that scenery was changing rapidly and I

was beginning to catch a glimpse of the tranquil stream whenever I looked out my window; she flowed relentlessly in profound silence.

Every time a chilled rush of wind cut through the air, the mother maple rained leaves; a rain of shrunken gold and brown leaves, which quivered before severing the ties with



their mother. Each goodbye exposed her sturdy, grey and scaly trunks a bit more than before. By the end of each November, this majestic maple was totally bare and skeletal, not a single leaf with a serrated edge adorned its boughs and branches.

On a crisp morning of fall, I could see men and women, alone or with their canine companions, walking on the grass

strewn with fallen leaves. If I kept my windows open, I could hear the crispy leaves getting crushed under their sneakered feet. In those mornings, the feeble mother maple perhaps wept in agony! But more agony awaited her.

One brisk autumn morning, a young man came and broke the neighbourhood's silence as well as the dry maple leaves' peaceful congregation. He carried on his shoulders a gasoline-powered leaf blower, which droned every time its nozzle propelled synthetic air. At first, the poor dry leaves shivered at the sound, then they began to fly and roll about in the warm, manmade air until finally settling on the sidewalks.

The siblings lay on top of each other in a pile, ready to be collected by the city's department of public works. The leaves knew well by then that it was time to bid a final goodbye to their mama and their siblings, who still dangled from branches high above, still safe and protected in their mother's embrace.

When twilight cloaked the city in blue and indigo that evening, I could hear the maple sobbing in misery; the misery of losing her children one by one. But I was also almost certain that she found solace in the truth that spring was not too many months away.

And when the queen of seasons would arrive the city, mother maple would clothe in green afresh, her infant leaves clinging on to her and fluttering in the springtime zephyr.

By Wara Karim
Photo: Collected