

Disney Heroine Round Table or “But I Digress”

By Peter David

Characters: Snow White, Jasmine, Belle, Ariel, Eilonwy

SNOW: Well, this is all tremendously exciting. Every decade or so, the nice folks at Disney sponsor a get-together with all the lead actresses of recent animated features. This gives us a chance to chat, exchange tips on how to clean house

JASMINE: This is soooo boring...

SNOW: ... and, over all, just get to know each other as girls.

BELLE: Women.

SNOW: Since I was the first full-length Disney heroine, they generally ask me to moderate. And I'd like to welcome this year's guests - Princess Jasmine from *Aladdin* ...

JASMINE: Is this going to take long?

SNOW: Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* - and congratulations again on that Best Picture nomination.

BELLE: Thank you. We were robbed. Losing to a cannibal - now, what does that say about society and its priorities? In the words of Shakespeare ...

SNOW: And, of course, Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*.

ARIEL: It's exciting to meet you, Snow.

SNOW: Thank you. Uhm, you're dripping on my clean floor.

ARIEL: Oh. Sorry.

SNOW: We *were* also going to be joined by Olivia Flaversham, the plucky little heroine from *The Great Mouse Detective*. But we had a bit of a mishap, because *someone* on the panel couldn't control her rather large kitty cat.

JASMINE: Look, I already *said* I was sorry. I'm no happier about it than anybody else. If the stupid invitation had *said* there were going to be mice running around, I wouldn't have brought Rajah along in the first place. OK? Let's move on.

SNOW: I must say, before we start, that I admit my breath is a bit taken away by the changes in clothing styles for Disney heroines. With your little outfit, Jasmine, and you, Ariel, with your - shells - It seems a little bit...what's the word?

BELLE: Inappropriate.

ARIEL: Oh, well, thanks a lot! Big talk from someone whose idea of a good time is sitting around in an apron talking to sheep.

BELLE: You talk to fish.

ARIEL: But they talk back.

SNOW: Actually, I was going to say "daring" rather than "inappropriate." But this brings us to our first point of discussion: Namely, what do you think our role in movies today should be?

JASMINE: I'll tell you what it *shouldn't* be. It shouldn't be sitting around waiting for someone to "take you away from it all." I mean, come on. Could you see me singing, "Some day my prince will come"? Ack ack ack.

SNOW: You don't have to stick your finger down your throat and gag, Jasmine. It happens to be a lovely song.

ARIEL: Jasmine's right. Life isn't something that happens to you. Life is what you make happen. You have to take control. That's what I did.

JASMINE: Me, too.

BELLE: So did I.

JASMINE: Oh, sure. Right.

BELLE: I did! Really!

ARIEL: Sure you did. First you walked around town, looking down your nose and talking about how simple all these hard-working villagers are and how there has to be more to life than that. If Cruella De Vil had sung

the exact same thing, people would have said it was the most arrogant song ever written.

BELLE: But ...

JASMINE: And, while you said you want more out of life, you didn't *do* anything to get it.

BELLE: Yes, I did! I gave up my liberty, sacrificing for my father! I promised I'd stay a prisoner in the Beast's castle, forever!

ARIEL: Uh huh. And how long was it before you went running out the front door saying, "Promise or no promise, I can't stay here another minute?" A week? A month? A year?

BELLE: Uhm ... well, actually ... about three, four hours, maybe. But there are such things as promises made under pressure, and they don't always count.

JASMINE: Well *there's* a woman of her word. Some heroine.

SNOW: Ladies, I think we're getting off the topic.

JASMINE: Me, I defied my father. I had the guts to go against what he said and run off.

ARIEL: Your father. Heh.

JASMINE: What's that supposed to mean?

ARIEL: The two of you with your fathers. You defied yours, she sacrificed for hers. And you've both got these roly-poly, cute, comedy-relief fathers. Me, I've got the King of the Sea for mine. He throws around energy bolts and can bench press a whale. I'm the only one with real guts here.

BELLE: More guts than brains, that's for sure. Cutting deals with the Sea Witch. *There* was a smooth move. Obviously, if you'd ever read anything, you'd've realized how dumb this is.

SNOW: Belle, what do you keep talking about?

BELLE: Crack open a book, why don't you? You too, Ms. "I Dream of Genie". And you too, Fishy.

ARIEL: I read books. Human books.

BELLE: Oh, right. You can't remember tough words like "feet" and you don't know why fire burns. How'd they miss having you on *Jeopardy*, I wonder. Oh, and here's a news flash for you: It's a fork, OK? A *fork*. You eat food with a fork. You don't comb your hair with it. If you combed your hair with it, it would be called a *comb*, not a *fork*. All right, Einstein?

JASMINE: Some of us have royal duties to attend to and don't have a lot of time for books.

BELLE: That is so typical. You three are just typical elitist examples of the societal class structure. All of you, born to royalty. Bored children of privilege.

SNOW: But you're royalty, too! At the end of the movie, you married ... uh ... what was his real name?

BELLE: I ... don't know. Besides, you all had it easy. You lived your lives in castles, children of kings and queens - or at least kings, since there never seem to be any queens in Disney films. So you endured a couple of days of hardship, the sort of life that I lived every single day, before you settled down with your prince. It's disgusting. Particularly you, Ariel, who totally subverted everything she was in order to be part of her man's world.

ARIEL: Oh, yeah? You looked pretty comfortable strutting around in that big yellow gown at the end. I didn't see you fighting to remain a peasant.

BELLE: That's all the underprivileged masses are to you, aren't they? Peasants?

ARIEL: Oh, geez, here she goes again.

SNOW: Actually, this presents us with another topic: Namely, what do you look for in a prince?

ARIEL: Well, for me, it was love at first sight. I watched him dancing, and talking, and ... I just knew.

JASMINE: "I just knew. I just knew." A guy flashes a smile and a royal title at you, and you get mushy. Love at first sight is a convenient excuse not to think.

SNOW: Some of us, Jasmine, are fortunate enough to meet our prince and be drawn to him immediately. Others of us turn princes into kitty treats for our tigers.

JASMINE: Some of us, Snow, *prefer* thinking. Ariel, your prince was heroic enough, but about as thick as a brick.

ARIEL: Why, you ...

JASMINE: And you, Snow, You never so much as *spoke* to the guy. How could you *possibly* have known he was the man for you? What about him could *possibly* have drawn you to him?

SNOW: If you want to know why I love him so, it's in his kiss.

BELLE: You're really pathetic, Snow, you know that? Not that I can stand Ariel or Jasmine, but Eric defeated Ursula, and Ariel went off with him. Aladdin defeated Jafar, and Jasmine married Aladdin. But the dwarves ...

SNOW: Dwarfs.

BELLE: Whatever. ... risked their lives for you - they adored you - and then some jerk prince comes along, gives you three seconds of liplock, and you abandon the dwarves ...

SNOW: Dwarfs.

BELLE: *Whatever!* ... and go riding off with him. What an idiot.

SNOW: **Sniff**

ARIEL: Oh, great. Now you made her cry.

JASMINE: She's a big girl. She can take it.

ARIEL: That's about the kind of empathy I'd expect from someone who walks around in her pajamas all day.

JASMINE: Fish Face.

ARIEL: Baklava Breath.

BELLE: Ah, the upper class, displaying their typical -

ARIEL AND JASMINE: *Shut up! (A young blonde girl enters.)*

EILONWY: Excuse me? Am I too late for the meeting?

SNOW: Who (*sniffle*) who are you?

EILONWY: I'm Eilonwy. I'm a princess.

BELLE: Oh, terrific. Another example of the -

JASMINE: I'm warning you. Rajah's still hungry.

SNOW: I'm sorry, dear. You're who?

EILONWY: Princess Eilonwy.

SNOW: Well ... I don't know who sent you here, but this is for Disney heroines.

EILONWY: But I *am* a Disney heroine. I was in *The Black Cauldron*. (*Blank stares from everyone.*)

ARIEL: The what?

EILONWY: Based on "The Chronicles of Prydain" books ...

SNOW: Books? Belle, I hate to ask ...

BELLE: Oh, right, now they come groveling.

JASMINE: Rajah! Time for din -

BELLE: OK, OK. It was a fantasy series by Lloyd Alexander.

EILONWY: Right! And I was in the movie!

JASMINE: What movie?

EILONWY: Oh, come on, didn't *anyone* see it? 1985? 80 minutes long? Supposed to usher in a new era of Disney animation?

ARIEL: Actually, *my* film did that.

JASMINE: Oh, aren't we full of ourselves.

EILONWY: Sword-and-sorcery epic? There was me and Taran the assistant pig-keeper, and Fflewddur Fflam ...

JASMINE: You *must* be joking.

SNOW: No, wait! I remember now. I got a ticket for an advance screening. But I was busy that night, so I sent Happy instead.

EILONWY: What did he think?

SNOW: He *hated* it. I've never seen Happy complain that much - or at all. But he just kept talking about how awful it was. Grumpy finally had to slap him.

EILONWY: That's not fair! We were groundbreaking!

BELLE: Poor spoiled princess, just like all the others. Boo-hoo.

SNOW: You know, these discussion groups used to be fun. Me and Cindy, we'd sit and chat for hours. Sure, Aurora would keep dozing off ...

BELLE: Shut up! Knock off that high-pitched little-girl voice! It's making me nuts! And get me the hell out of here!

SNOW: Well, I hope you'll all join us for our next discussion group -

ARIEL: Jasmine! Make your stupid tiger spit Sebastian out! Right now!

SNOW: It's going to be called, "It's a Dog's Life, and So Am I." Participants will be Lady from *Lady and the Tramp*, Perdita from *101 Dalmatians*, and Georgette from *Oliver and Company*. I'm sure the fur will really fly. Thanks for coming. Hi ho, hi ho.