

Cannes 2015: Tale of Tales (Matteo Garrone, 2015)



The label of 'dark fantasy' is as overused and rehashed as nearly every other, more accessible genre these days. Its definition is indelibly hazy, but the resultant pieces of work that attach themselves to it tend to be rather empty; a seductive surface with little underneath. Just as we had begun to doubt the categorisation even more, in struts the Queen, Salma Hayek. She's wearing a crown, strapped into a corset to the point of going blue in the face accompanied by John C. Reilly as her King. From the moment he submerges into icy waters, dons an old age diver's suit and impales a mythical sea monster; we're utterly, utterly sold.

Inspired by Basile's 17th century fairytales, Tale of Tales follows the actions and consequences of three different leaders. A Queen living in unaware submission to her son. A father and a King, distracted from his daughter's requests by an insect that he nurtures. A promiscuous King and leader, spellbound by the voice of two women who live under a terrible aging curse.

The ever flowing beauty of Tale of Tales makes it a fable of immeasurable proportions. Constantly unfolding, it's links are never crystal clear, adding to the idea that their lives bare no resemblance to each others. As a result, it's easy to indulge in each person's fable without the constant need of joining broken ties. It's a sumptuously realised piece of work; often grim, violent and at times comical.

Visually, it ranks itself as one of the most alluring and magnificent pieces of film making of the year so far. Beyond Toby Jones oversized CGI pet flea (yes, you read that

correct), there's a stunning scope of make up artistry, animatronics and cinematography that Hollywood studios will salivate over.

But perhaps what allows Tale of Tales to truly be so affecting is that its fairy tale surface is supported by a strong, modern visioned backbone. These are stories of femininity at heart; bold, strong, even flawed women. Women who refuse to live under the foot of men and flourish beyond their belittled expectations. Garrone's visionary work here displays his female characters as the stooges, before swapping roles and paying them their due.

Forget any pretense about mythology and fables you may have, Tale of Tales uses that as a gorgeous, alluring coverup for a film about women, strength and unquestionable power. This, my friends, is Cannes first masterpiece.



Tale of Tales had its World Premiere at the Festival de Cannes on May 14th