

Recommended Movie

Hook starring Robin Williams, Julia Roberts, Dustin Hoffman, and Maggie Smith. The launching pad for this movie is the question of what would happen if Peter Pan ever grew up. The answer given within this movie is handled masterfully, skipping none of the emotional significance or the depth of meaning behind each formative choice.

The movie begins with the invasion of the familiar world by persons from a world generally believed to not even exist. What allows for all that goes wrong to begin going right, is the transformative gift of imagination--imagination that is real and not just meaningless images within one's mind. The way in which the power of the imagination is rediscovered within this movie, is through remembering all that has been forgotten--both pleasant and unpleasant. It is all part of the world in which the battles of the soul must be fought.

The prize for which the battle within this movie is fought, is the relationship of one person to another and by what combination of honesty, love, manipulation, and sacrifice such relationships will be characterized. Ultimately, the villain is defined specifically by a relationship that is missing.

On a deeper level, curious anomalies stand out like red warning flags, calling for symbolic interpretation. Chief among these is Captain Hook's terror of ticking clocks. Why would there be a clock in a land within which time is irrelevant, a land in which no one ever grows older? If time is only a measure of passing events and not of age, then why be so concerned with time at all? If you don't get something done today, in Never-Never Land there really will always be tomorrow. Is it indeed Tomorrow which Hook fears, since traveling toward the future brings each and every one of us closer to the day of our physical death?

I don't think Granny Darling is afraid of death, however, which is why she embodies a healthier integration of all of the times of her life. As mother and grandmother, she is willing to play with her grandchildren under a bed-sheet-tent in the nursery, just before bedtime.

She is also the keeper of secrets and possesses a broader understanding of the interconnectedness of everyone in her family, who does all she can to pass these gifts to generations of children and adults who will come after her. Harkening back to the original story of Peter Pan, she was the archetypal mother. Stretching the metaphors a bit further in a theologically pagan direction, one could ask whether this might be a story illustrating something of the relationship between Pan and the Goddess.

What it is most of all, I think, is the invitation to allow for unexplainable and beautiful magic in each moment of our lives and to love every sparkling faerie who brings such magic to us. May one and all and every thing, blessed and loved ever be.

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All correspondence may be directed to:

Sister Who

POB 18474

Denver, CO 800218-0474

or email address:

SisterWho@sisterwho.com

Sister Who's Web Page:

<http://www.sisterwho.com>

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Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding. Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed. Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified. Blessings, love, and peace to you.
---Sister Who

Pacing Myself in Troubled Times

An old, old story tells of a race between a turtle and a rabbit (or a tortoise and a hare, whichever way you want to name them). The rabbit set off confidently, stopped to rest and fell asleep, and woke to reach the finish line just after the turtle had already crossed over. I trust this story is familiar to all of you. My intention within this article is to recognize that these two competitors take many forms and reside equally within each of us. One life-long struggle I think we all share, is to bring these two inner forms into harmony, the inner passions that can drive us forward at a (literally and figuratively) blinding pace and the stubborn determination to keep putting one foot in front of the other even when the challenge we're addressing seems ridiculously impossible.

The second major element of this story that perhaps gets less recognition, however, is the terrain over which the course of the race is charted. At the starting line, various well-intentioned individuals may offer is their particular maps. In running the race ourselves, however, innumerable variables and unexpected additional elements are encountered and a significant part of the struggle becomes the challenge of dealing with any particular map's inaccuracies. True, the course defined on the map may be the core element around which all of the variables occur, but ignoring the variables as if they were therefore somehow unimportant can be disastrous also.

A question which has weighed heavily upon my mind during the last couple of weeks in particular was whether to wait until

after the presidential election (which is less than two weeks away) before creating this newsletter. On one hand, I would be able to specifically respond to the outcome of that election. On the other hand, however, I may be exaggerating the significance of that election.

On the one hand, George W. Bush has said quite specifically that he will work to undermine, restrict, or retract the civil rights of gays and lesbians in whatever ways he can as well as the legality of medically supervised safe abortions (in relation to the potential mother, of course). As an openly gay man, that places me directly in front of his loaded gun. As to abortion, I'm most fond of repeating "an ounce of prevention (an approximate weight of a condom) is worth a pound of cure (an approximate weight of an aborted fetus)." The best way to fight abortion, in my opinion, is to eliminate the need for it. In relation to civil rights, what is really needed is a law against discrimination on the basis of any unrelated criteria--gender, orientation, age, disability, race, etc.--but then of course we would also have to define the word "unrelated" so that it could not be extended to the normal discomfort experienced whenever ignorance is challenged by something new and unfamiliar.

On the other hand, all the candidates are politicians and therefore subject to the very complex game of chess that regional and national government includes. Al Gore may be unpredictable in some ways, but he does seem to be a person of basically good, broad-minded, and fair character. No

matter who wins, there will most likely be unpleasant surprises somewhere along the road. Still, we do live within a democracy and a healthy democracy is absolutely dependent upon its citizenry showing up on election day and speaking up every other day of the year. A very short email I received recently said something like, "Need two good reasons to vote? Matthew Shepherd can't and Dr. Laura can." The way the title "Dr." is bandied about and the authority it seems to convey of late is absolutely ridiculous, considering how little actual understanding and wisdom (in the broader sense) are required to use this title. It is perhaps reminiscent of that time in history when the royal families of Europe became so in-bred that idiocy was common and the significance of being royalty was degraded.

On the one hand, I can easily imagine a time of extreme violence if Mr. Bush is elected to the office of president and attempts to turn back the clock of societal evolution. On the other hand, I'm sure we've already survived worse presidents than he could possibly be. Mr. Gore's long-standing reputation for supporting environmental causes sounds very appealing, but the historical question remains concerning the difference between any particular president's intentions and his actual accomplishments.

I want to be careful to avoid making any direct recommendation, however, because through this extremely pivotal moment in time and beyond, I believe that it is even more essential that we each retain the ability to think for ourselves individually. Therefore, the polling booth on election day needs to remain a private and secure location for registering one's own opinions about who should be our nation's or our community's next leaders. Nevertheless, I confess to praying several times each day, every day for the past several weeks, as if my survival depended upon it (because I think that in some way it

does), that Mr. Bush will not be our next national president.

Certainly a strong case could be made for any of the various candidates and the votes cast to make the actual decision have a very wide spectrum of determining factors, some respectable and some reprehensible. What remains when the dust clears is whether we will stand by each other no matter what the outcome is. I was quite impressed to hear of an older Caucasian member of a Unitarian congregation in Montana, a rather cantankerous fellow who is frequently irritating in his outspoken activism, promising to defend a gay member of the congregation with his life, if necessary. I fear his stand, however, is something of an exception and not very typical.

For anyone who hasn't heard, I was forced out of the intensive computer course in which I was enrolled, at the very beginning of October. The instruction and testing were so poorly executed that even studying twelve hours each day and meeting with three other students for additional tutoring proved to be ultimately insufficient to satisfactorily pass every exam.

In the days that followed, I finally arrived at a decision to complete a book manuscript before beginning the search for an adequate "day-job" by which to keep my bills paid. It is only the wise management of the educational loan I received at the beginning of that dreadful course that allows me to do this and I earnestly hope that time will prove that I am now making the best use of my time and energy.

The book manuscript upon which I am working is entitled Re-Inventing the Sacred Clown and it is perhaps the closest thing to an autobiography of Sister Who that I will ever write. I have set a deadline of December 31 as the last possible moment for creating a finished manuscript, leaving January and February for the unwelcome challenge of securing the above-mentioned day-job.

After that? Well, let's just hope that something presents itself or life may suddenly feel like I fell off a cliff. I have absolutely nothing beyond that date, to which I can securely point at present, though a number of interesting possibilities do exist.

Through all of this, I again and again find myself confronted with forms of pacing, events that shape and regulate the speed and direction of my life's path. Just as a pregnant woman allows nine months for the birth of her baby, I must be careful not to rip from the womb some creative thing which is not yet ready to be born. I try to focus upon the progress rather than how slowly the date of accomplishment sometimes seems to be approaching. I try not to run so much that I am always out of breath and unable to respond to unexpected new challenges that suddenly appear along the way. I try to remember the wisdom I have gained along the way and to avoid immediately responding to any situation with more immature instincts, to respond to a situation with all that I am rather than just with what I immediately feel. One

"If my hands
are dirty,
it's because
I've been working
in the garden.
If I experience
problems,
It's because
I'm involved
In life."

---Sister Who

of the greatest paradoxes of life seems to be that the more the extremes of the universe are expressed, the closer they stand to each other. In the times of greatest confusion arise examples of the clearest and most transcendent human understanding. In the times of greatest war and suffering arise the most noble and loving creatures who have ever lived. In those moments when death is most available, new life has an equal opportunity to begin. In those moments when bodies have been most imprisoned, spirits have soared to new heights.

I cannot remember at the moment, whether I have ever shared this story within one of my newsletters before, which I received within an email quite some time ago, but this seems to be a good time to share it again. The occasion of the story was a foot race within the Special Olympics (athletic competition for people with various physical and mental disabilities), somewhere within the state of Washington, if I remember correctly. Perhaps a dozen competitors stood along the starting line, listening with great anticipation for the sound of the gun. When it sounded, they all started off with great enthusiasm. A few feet beyond the starting line, however, a young boy with cerebral palsy tripped, fell, and began to cry. The other competitors stopped. Then they turned around and went back--every single one of them. They helped him stand up again and a girl with Down's Syndrome said, "this will make it better" and kissed his forehead. Then they lined up, hooked their arms together, and marched to the finish line together. The cheers from the crowd were deafening.

The competitors in that race understood that sometimes it's just not about who gets there first. It's about standing up for others and believing in something bigger than yourself. It's about taking the time and giving whatever's necessary, to make sure that everyone wins.