

The “Mistress of Evil” or a Maligned Fairy?

A Talk with Maleficent over the fable, the facts, and the fabulous.

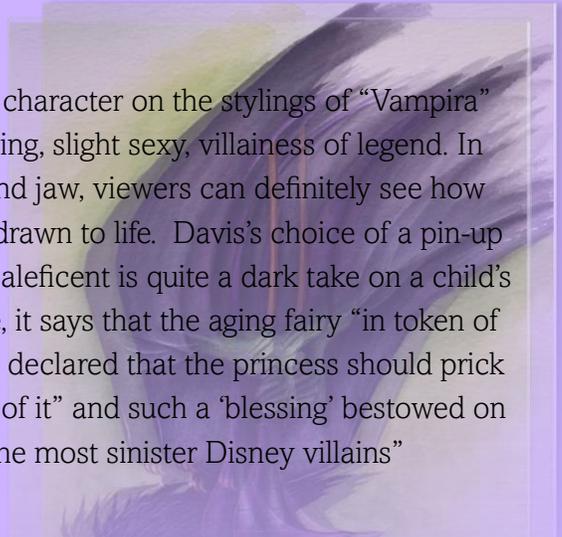
By Robin Reed on October 27, 2023

The tale of Maleficent is one that that is, according to Lauren Duca, “over 600 years old” and yet is still captivating audiences through the magic of Walt Disney Parks every “Not So Spooky” Halloween Party or just in a new telling of the story in their films. The 1st incarnation of Maleficent, as we think of her today, was from the 1959 Disney film “Sleeping Beauty” (Wikipedia) talking about the fable of Princess Aurora and the death curse of the Evil Fairy at her christening. However, in Charles Perrault’s tale “The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods” she is only referenced as an “aged fairy...[who] for more than 50 years she had not quitted the tower in which she lived and...[was] supposed dead.” So is Maleficent a victim of misinformation or has she risen to embody her roots?

Marc Davis, her Animator, based the 1st drawings of the character on the stylings of “Vampira” as played by Maila Nurmi and set the tone of this imposing, slight sexy, villainess of legend. In looking at the lines of the face and jaw, viewers can definitely see how this stately figure was originally drawn to life. Davis’s choice of a pin-up horror queen as his model for Maleficent is quite a dark take on a child’s fairytale. In the In Perrault’s tale, it says that the aging fairy “in token of spite rather than of infirmity, she declared that the princess should prick her hand with a spindle, and die of it” and such a ‘blessing’ bestowed on a child cemented her as on of “the most sinister Disney villains” (Wikipedia).



Figure 1: actress Maila Nurmi, best known for her character Vampira, a camp icon of the 1950s.



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(Wikipedia)

In the 2014 reboot of Disney's "Maleficent" took the story of the original and gave it a spin to show a more sympathetic interpretations on this villain's origins. The story here is of a young fairy betrayed by a human, and thus lends more reasoning to the later cursing of the young princess. However, even with the curse, we see a queen of the fairy realm, that is not "cruel for cruelty's sake" according to Lauren Duca. The new film was styled on Lady Gaga's video "Born This Way" and this makes this reporter wonder, was she?



When we spoke to her, on a bit of a chilly day in the glade-her tower a bit damp and imposing, she had the following to say:

- ❖ *Reed:* Thank you for meeting for this interview today. There have been multiple interpretations of your origin story, we want to know- How would you describe yourself?
- *Maleficent:* *You're welcome, it's always best when one is invited and not just represented out of context. I have viewed the representations of myself through the ages, and I am glad to see more of a truth coming to light. I see myself as a representation of a non-traditional fairy with more power than maybe the world was ready for.*
- ❖ *Reed:* The tale of this curse by the Aged Fairy has been seen over and over again, did Disney get it right?



- *Maleficent:* *For one, I am not the "aged fairy" as we truly do not age, our magic keeps us young with nature. For the second, each of the tales get wrong the reasoning for my gift to the young princess. It was not to be harsh and just kill a child, it was to show all humans that life is precious and you must be careful.*
- ❖ *Reed:* What do you see as your strengths?
- ❖ *Maleficent:* *The depth of my power and control, I don't have the short temper that seems to have been presented of myself in the past. If you could transform into a fire breathing dragon at will, wouldn't you think it would take a lot no to just incinerate someone who irritates you?*
- ❖ *Reed:* What do you see as your weaknesses?
- ❖ *Maleficent:* *<eye roll> Were you not listening to the fire breathing dragon option?*

- ❖ *Reed*: Is there anything in your branding and representation that you wish to change or modify?
- *Maleficent*: I don't want to see my image get over done, there are so many new shows like the Descendants Franchise & "Once Upon a Time" that can make a villain seem greedy or overdone and I am NEVER out of style.

From a cautionary tale to a modern revamp with a sensitive soul, Maleficent is the "Mistress of Evil" but never one to be out of the spotlight, even from afar. See her currently appearing at the Walt Disney World "Not so Scary Halloween Party" from now until Nov 3rd and on T-shirts, mugs, and merch year round.

Duca, Lauren. "Maleficent 101: Everything you need to know about pop culture's most terrifying fairy." *Huffpost.com*. The Huffington Post. 22 May 2014.

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Robin Reed is an ELA Teacher, a mom, a traveler, and someone that loves to learn from all the aspects of her life-whenever possible! She has written multiple types of curriculumms, as well as curating her life on social media. Follow along for more details in the life the modern teacher, manic mom of a teen & a 20-something, with the sassiest cat on the planet, and their weekly wonderings in this thing called life.