

Of Diana Prince and Dreaming Girls

Let's rewind 13 years. Picture: four year old girl, three foot two, two hands holding one bloody knee, gushing down onto bright red boots trimmed in white and gold. Her skin peeled open, revealing crimson and capillary, her vocal chords are breaking under the strain of ripping screams from themselves, her eyes shine blue in storm clouds, rubbed red and raw from too many passes with plastic gold bracelets, she cries and she cries and she cries and they keep running. They keep running off into the distance; they leave her there because 'she couldn't keep up anyways, couldn't do it,' she's a little too small, a little too slow, a little too weak, a little too *girl*.

Last weekend I saw *Wonder Woman*. I drove to Rave Cinemas, parked my tiny car five rows from the entrance, bought a ticket, paid too much for snacks. Did the normal thing, you know: acted like normal, acted like ordinary, acted like this could be anything but extra-ordinary. I walked past four little girls and I smiled, normally, you know, but on the inside I was beaming and screaming out loud — Black Canary style —, my insides were doing the She-Hulk shimmy in time to the beat of Batgirl, my gastrointestinal organs grinning with Gamora because there is an action movie that I am about to see that features women.

Not women with outrageously large breasts who show up to make the main character struggle between saving the day and bending her over a desk until he sees stars, not women seen through the boner-boggled lens of most billion dollar box office movies, or women as drawn in comic books. There is a tendency for male comic book artists to draw women naked. Oh, with clothes on, but basically naked, because, you know, you gotta get that labia poppin' even through a superhero suit that is supposed to protect your internal organs and, hopefully, your vagina too. No, this movie features real women, with muscles and wrinkles and melanin and probably some penises if the comics are anything to go by and boobs that don't fall out when they bend over and I smiled at those girls because they get to see that. They get to grow up in a world where they can see themselves on screen as something more than eye candy, as something more than the sex toy, the bimbo, the "Oh save me, Captain Fantastic! I'll make your night fantastic!"

I walked into the movie theater, sat my butt down on those awful seats, and told myself to calm down. It's not like your childhood dream is being finally being realized and you can't contain yourself with your emotion, no. It's nothing like that. You'll be fine. You'll be fine.

I lost my shit three seconds in.

I watched, eyes glued to swirling chainmail and leather, shots of bicep *not* booty, hundreds of women gliding through the air with swords and shields; I watched as tiny Diana found herself in strength; I watched as she said that men are not necessary to make a woman orgasm; and I watched, crying, as she spoke of the goodness in people. I watched and I cried because no one says that in action movies. No one says "I believe in love." No one says "I

believe in kindness.” No one says “I believe in the goodness of humanity.” I thought that in that moment, my heart would beat right out of my chest and tears would cascade down my cheeks forever because *I* believe in the goodness of humanity. That’s all I’ve ever believed. I believe it because we keep fighting and speaking and believing. I believe it because we’re advancing, because movies like this are being made, because little girls can go home and believe in themselves and little boys don’t have to be the strong ones anymore, because there is a 20 foot woman on screen singing the song of my heart, because someone *gets* it. I believe in the goodness of humanity with all of my being and that’s all I’ve ever wanted other people to believe.

As the movie came to a close, for a moment, I was four years old again. Four year old Emma looked out of my eyes and I swear, I swear, in that moment, she was flying. All I wanted as a child was to be a hero. All I ever wanted was to be good enough, fast enough, a little less small, a little less slow, a little less weak, a little less *girl*. All I wanted was to see someone like me as a hero, to let me believe that I could be one.

So, let’s rewind again, back 13 years. Picture: four year old girl, three foot two, two hands holding one taped up knee. Her golden tiara sits safely in her hair, the star peeking through dirty blonde, lasso secured to her waist. She stands. She straightens. She makes two fists and brings them to rest on her hips and proclaims for all the world to hear:

“I am a Wonder Woman.”