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Damsel (2024 film)

Damsel is a 2024 American dark fantasy film directed by Juan Carlos Fresnadillo and written by Dan Mazeau. Millie Bobby Brown stars as Elodie, a young woman who accepts a marriage proposal only to realize that she is being used to repay a royal family's ancient debts and must now escape while surviving attacks from the dragon lurking in the chasm. The rest of the principal cast consists of Ray Winstone, Nick Robinson, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Angela Bassett, and Robin Wright.

Damsel began streaming on Netflix to mixed reviews on March 8, 2024.

Plot

The first king of Aurea leads a futile attack on a dragon residing in his realm. All the king's men are killed, leaving the king at the Dragon's mercy.

Centuries later, Elodie, the adolescent daughter of Lord Bayford, receives a proposal from Queen Isabelle of Aurea to marry her son, Prince Henry. On her father's urging, Elodie agrees to the marriage so her bride price can help their impoverished people. Upon arriving in Aurea, Elodie and Henry are initially uninterested in each other, but begin to bond as they share a desire to travel. Elodie's stepmother, Lady Bayford, becomes suspicious of the motives of Queen Isabelle, leading her to futilely implore Elodie to end the engagement.

After the wedding, Elodie and Henry take part in an ancient ritual in the mountains, supposedly to celebrate their union. Isabelle describes the pact between the first king and the Dragon, where he had to sacrifice his three daughters to ensure peace between his people and the dragon. Following a ceremony where their palms are cut and held together, Henry carries Elodie across the narrow path over the Dragon's lair, then at Isabelle's behest throws her down the chasm.

Recovering from the fall, Elodie realizes that she is the actual sacrifice. She escapes the Dragon after it burns her leg, and discovers an illuminated cave filled with glowing silk worms, which she collects as a light source. Elodie reaches a chamber

Damsel



Film poster

Directed by	Juan Carlos Fresnadillo
Written by	Dan Mazeau
Produced by	Joe Roth <div>Jeff Kirschenbaum</div> <div>Chris Castaldi</div>
Starring	<div>Millie Bobby Brown</div> <div>Ray Winstone</div> <div>Nick Robinson</div> <div>Shohreh Aghdashloo</div> <div>Angela Bassett</div> <div>Robin Wright</div>
Cinematography	Larry Fong
Edited by	John Gilbert
Music by	David Fleming
Production company	Roth/Kirschenbaum Films
Distributed by	Netflix
Release date	March 8, 2024
Running time	110 minutes ^[1]

with the note "Safe Here She Cannot Reach", the names of past victims, and a map carved into the wall. In Elodie's sleep, the worms heal the burn on her leg.

Country	United States
Language	English

Elodie follows the map to a dead end at a high vertical drop on the mountainside. She discovers the remains of dead dragon hatchlings, explaining the reason for the royal sacrifices. A rescue party led by Lord Bayford arrives. The Dragon kills them, including Lord Bayford, but the distraction allows Elodie to escape the mountain. She takes one of the rescue party's horses and hides under a rock as the Dragon burns the surrounding area in an unsuccessful pursuit.

Alerted by the conflagration that Elodie's sacrifice has failed, Isabelle resorts to kidnapping Elodie's younger sister Floria as a replacement. After learning this from a desperate Lady Bayford, Elodie returns to the mountain to rescue Floria, who the dragon has left alive as bait.

Elodie creates a diversion to reach Floria. Telling her sister to hide, she confronts the Dragon and tries to convince her that they were deceived by the Aureans: by joining their cut hands at the wedding, the blood of the brides and the Aurean royals mingled, making the Dragon think of the princesses as being of Aurean descent. Refusing to believe Elodie, the Dragon states that the first king's assault was unprovoked, and then attacks her, but Elodie tricks her into burning herself. With the Dragon at her mercy, she convinces the Dragon of the truth and heals both of them with the glowing worms.

Elodie then interrupts the wedding of another sacrifice at the palace, exposing the Aurean royal family's treachery. Elodie advises the new bride and her family to flee, and the Dragon burns the palace with all the Aurean royals and nobles inside. Days later, Elodie, Floria, and Lady Bayford sail home, loaded with supplies and accompanied by the Dragon.

Cast

- [Millie Bobby Brown](#) as Elodie, a young woman from an unnamed northern land
- [Ray Winstone](#) as Lord Bayford, the lord of an unnamed northern land and Elodie's father
- [Angela Bassett](#) as Lady Bayford, the wife of Lord Bayford and Elodie's stepmother
- [Brooke Carter](#) as Floria, Elodie's younger sister
- [Nick Robinson](#) as Prince Henry, the prince of Aurea
- [Robin Wright](#) as Queen Isabelle, the [queen regnant](#) of Aurea and Prince Henry's mother
- [Milo Twomey](#) as King Roderick, the [king consort](#) of Aurea and Prince Henry's father
- [Nicole Joseph](#) as Princess Victoria, one of the previous princesses sacrificed to the dragon
- [Shohreh Aghdashloo](#) as the voice of the Dragon, an unnamed dragon that demands sacrifices of Aurea's princesses

Production

Damsel was directed by [Juan Carlos Fresnadillo](#) from a script by [Dan Mazeau](#), and produced by [Joe Roth](#) and [Jeff Kirschenbaum](#) through [their production company](#) for [Netflix](#).^[2] [Emily Ballou](#) and [Mark Bomback](#) were credited for "additional literary material" off-screen.^[3]

In November 2020, [Millie Bobby Brown](#) was cast as Princess Elodie; she was also named as the film's [executive producer](#).^[2] In April 2022, it was reported that [Angela Bassett](#), [Nick Robinson](#), [Robin Wright](#), [Ray Winstone](#), [Brooke Carter](#), and [Shohreh Aghdashloo](#) were part of the cast.^{[4][5]}

Principal photography took place in early 2022.^[6] Cave scenes were shot at Troubadour Meridian Water Studios in London. Filming also took place in Portugal at Tomar, Sortelha, Serra da Estrela, and at the Batalha Monastery.^[7] The dragon was designed by Patrick Tatopoulos.^[8]

The film's score was composed by David Fleming and produced by Hans Zimmer.^[9] The soundtrack includes a cover of the Johnny Cash song "Ring of Fire", performed by Lykke Li. Netflix Music released the soundtrack album digitally on March 5, 2024.^[10]

Release

Damsel was scheduled to stream on Netflix on October 13, 2023.^[11] However, due to the impact of the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike on the film's promotion, the original release date was postponed and the film began streaming on March 8, 2024.^{[12][13]}

Novel

Author Evelyn Skye released a novelization of the film in advance. She stated: "The easiest way to think about it is this: Dan Mazeau wrote the original screenplay. I was able to read an early draft and was given free rein to write my own version of the story, which ultimately became the novel. Both the novel and the movie may stem from the same origin, but they are also each their own unique works of art".^[14]

The novel was published by Penguin Random House on April 18, 2023.^[15]

Reception

Audience viewership

According to Netflix, in the first three days the film recorded 35.3 million views and placed number one in 79 countries.^{[16][17]} It also had 64.8 million hours viewed within the same time period.^[17]

Critical response

The film received mixed reviews.^{[18][19]} On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 56% of 124 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.5/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Damsel* has an appealing action hero in Millie Bobby Brown, whose gutsy performance is often enough to balance the scales against the film's underpowered story and occasionally unconvincing effects."^[20] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 46 out of 100, based on 28 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[21]

Mick LaSalle of the San Francisco Chronicle criticized Brown's character, but praised her commitment to the role, writing "The movie could have used a little less of Brown cowering behind boulders as the flames get closer and a little more of her getting even with the people who put her in this predicament".^[22] Peter Debruge of Variety wrote, "Deliciously improper at times, *Damsel* adheres to codes that can feel a bit calculated, less organic than crafted in response to a newly progressive corporate agenda (the signs are there at all levels, from inclusive casting to occasionally self-righteous dialogue)".^[9] Kate Erbland of IndieWire

gave it a grade of "C+"^[13] Tim Robey of *The Telegraph* awarded it one star out of five, writing "If a straight-to-landfill quality is synonymous with the worst of Netflix, *Damsel* sums this up by having the tackiness of a plastic wedding cake."^[23]

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External links

- - *Damsel* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13452446/>) at IMDb
 - *Damsel* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/vm13478672036>) at AllMovie
 - *Damsel* (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/damsel-2024>) at Metacritic
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