

## Review #25 : *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012)

Kristen Stewart and Chris Hemsworth



*Snow White and the Huntsman* reinvents the legendary story in a film of astonishing beauty and imagination. It's the last thing you would expect from a picture with this title. It sometimes falters in its storytelling and timing – and sometimes even acting, but, oh, *what a wonderful ride...*



**Kristen Stewart plays an older Snow White than the one we usually think of** – after some glimpses of her past childhood, we catch her up locked in a room of her late father's castle, imprisoned by his cruel second wife (**Charlize Theron**). When she escapes and sets about righting wrongs, she is a mature young woman, of interest to the two young men who join in her mission. But the movie sidesteps scenes of romance, and in a way, I suppose that was a wise choice.



**Chris Hemsworth is the heroic, mead-guzzling hunter assigned by the Queen to track down Snow White** and bring her back to the castle. After encountering her, however, he is so impressed he changes sides. Sam Claflin is Prince William, the smitten duke's son. Both men join in an unstated alliance.

**The Queen lives in terror of losing the beauty of her youth** and constantly tops up with the blood of virgins to restore it. She tests her success with the proverbial mirror on the wall,

which melts into molten metal and assumes a spectral form. **Her wardrobe is of astounding perfection, enhancing her devilish beauty +++**





**The castle, which sits in eerie splendour on an island joined to the mainland only at low tide**, is a gothic fantasy that reminds me of the *Ghormenghast* series. The Queen is joined there by her brother, somewhat diminished by his blond page-boy haircut, who does her bidding but seems rather out to lunch. Extras appear when needed, then disappear. The Queen commands extraordinary supernatural powers, including the ability to materialize countless black birds that can morph into fighting demons or shards of cutting metal.

**All of this is rendered appropriately by the special effects**, but the treasure of this film is in two of its **locations** : a harsh, forbidding **Dark Forest** and an enchanted **Fairyland**. Both of these realms exist near the castle, and the Huntsman is enlisted in the first place because he knows the Dark Forest, where Snow White has taken refuge. In this forbidding realm, nothing lives, and it is thick with the blackened bones of dead trees, as if a forest fire had burned only the greenery. There is no cheer here and a monstrous troll confronts Snow White in a dramatic stare-down. After the Huntsman frees her from the Dark Forest, they are delighted to find, or be found by, the Eight Dwarves. These characters look strangely familiar, but no wonder here! The magic of CGI has provided the faces of familiar British actors such as **Ian Mc Shane, Ray Winstone, Nick Frost, Eddie Marsan and Toby Jones**. While this technique is effective, it nevertheless deprives eight real dwarves with jobs, which isn't really fair...

**The dwarves lead them to my favourite realm in the film, an enchanting fairyland, which is a triumph of art direction and CGI.** Mushrooms open their eyes and regard the visitors. Cute forest animals scamper and gambol in tribute to a forest scene as in Disney's 1937 animated film. The fairies themselves are naked, pale-skinned spirits with old, wise

faces. The spirit of this forest is embodied by a great white stag with expressive eyes and horns that spread in awesome complexity. This is a really wonderful scene. **Rupert Sanders** definitely made **5 star photographic handling**, thus establishing quite memorable and eerie places. There may be somehow a feeling of superficiality in all this and it may not look quite as perfect as for instance Elvish sceneries in *The Lord of the Rings* yet it brings us closer to what we had in the 1940s animation film and it will make you feel like a child again, with your eyes wide open, filled with wonder and admiration...

**There's also a very moving scene with the Huntsman** reminiscing his wife's death and eventually acknowledge his love for Snow White. Now this is a very bold and unheard of twist — yet it has the merit of putting aside Sam Claflin's pathetic and evanescent Prince, with whom Kristen Stewart seems less comfortable as an actress as well...





**As for the rest, there is a sufficiency of medieval battle scenes** and an exciting siege of the castle featuring catapults that hurl globes of burning tar — always enjoyable.





**There is a great film here somewhere,** — perhaps one that allowed greater complexity for the characters than in usual contemporary films. Let alone the visual **wonderments**, *Snow White and the Huntsman* is a considerable experience. A must-see +++

