

The Shamer's Daughter

Director's statement

When my father and I walked out of Scala Bio in Aalborg in the summer of 1978, we both knew that we had just experienced something special and extraordinary. The two of us had just entered an entirely different world and yet experienced something quite close to us. We had witnessed a grand space adventure so down to earth that it seemed quite realistic. How could it feel so ingenuous when everything was created? Did the force really exist? Did any habitable planets with two suns exist? We had both just discovered it. This was a defining moment for me, and it is one of the reasons why I work with storytelling for the silver screen.

In *The Shamer's Daughter*, Lene Kaaberbøl has created a universe, where I was able to recall that sensation of being far, far away and at the same time being surrounded by characters that seem candid and genuine with quite compelling everyday dilemmas. It was evident that the story of Dina who reluctantly accepts her identity, a story set in a marvelous and adventurous world with dragons and supernatural abilities insisted on being brought to the silver screen.

Despite the fact that we are in a fantasy world, one of the main qualities of the book is the honest description of the characters' inner turmoil, which translates into true feelings. The characters have vital existential problems that tip the story towards the more serious, dramatic and creepy but that also make it epic, adventurous and fantastic. As an audience we do not know what happens to Dina beforehand, so we are as surprised, frightened and enthusiastic as her, when she faces new friends or foes. I want to portray a young person – a small person – who stumbles through a grand, violent and confusing world, while being introduced to the complexities of the world and learning to be the best version of her. The visual perspective and my fascination is the gifted child in this fantastical world and not the fantastical world with a child in it. Adapting a novel means compromises, but it was paramount to me to maintain the tone of Lene Kaaberbøl's work. It is a tough and dark novel, so it must be a tough and dark film, but both are full of hope and we never turn off the light.

Lene Kaaberbøl's bestseller *The Shamer's Daughter* have many interesting themes, but the most prevalent that I have been drawn to is; how does your world turn out – the inner and outer – an objective place to live? How do you calibrate your moral compass? It is an existential and universal issue that across age, gender, time, fantasy and reality relates to being a human being.

With my grown up experience I have made a film that the child in me wants to see. And in all modesty I hope to grant any child and its parents a wonderful moment they can share and hopefully as insightful an experience as I had with my father back in 1978.

Best regards,

Kenneth Kainz