

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 163, No. 112

Serving Chicago's legal community for 162 years

Gadot's role shows rare superhero combo of capability, compassion

Now that she's debuted in the DC cinema world, will the guys in capes even compete?

Deep under the I.M. Pei pyramids of the modern day Louvre, antiquities curator Diana Prince receives a correspondence from Bruce Wayne, the reclusive billionaire. It's a battered World War I era photograph of Wonder Woman, in her golden headband and glamazon get-up, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in a bombed-out European palazzo with a ragged, if triumphant-looking crew of men — a handsome American, a fezzed North African, an American Indian and a kilted Scot.

Bruce wants an explanation. The query causes Diana to reflect on her past, beginning the original story of Wonder Woman, the eponymous shero of director Patty Jenkins' blockbuster movie.

Wonder Woman, nee Diana, Princess of the Amazons, grew up on the paradisiacal island Themyscira, populated by women and insulated from the perils of the world of men by an invisible atmospheric shield. These women,

Amazons, spend their days in military and athletic training.

It's 1918, and the War to End All Wars is raging. An airplane shot down by the Germans crashes through Themyscira's protective membrane. Diana rescues its pilot, American-British spy Steve Trevor (Chris Pine), and the two bond while teaching each other about their respective cultures.

He explains the ferocious war in Europe, and she implores him to take her to the front. Diana believes

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she alone has the "god-killer" weapon that can destroy Ares, the god of war, who has fomented this unspeakable mayhem.

Gal Gadot is the perfect choice to portray the beautiful warrior. She's a former Miss Israel and



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dancer-choreographer, an Israeli Defense Force combat instructor and mother of two young daughters who performed her own stunts in the "Fast & Furious" franchise — a wonder woman even if she'd never been cast in this movie.

Her faint Israeli accent gives her fish-out-of-water character just the right tincture of separation to lend credibility to Diana's incredulity.

In behavioral-economic circles, there is research that describes how a woman must be perceived in order to succeed in the workplace: She must project both capability and warmth. That's not an easy task. It's a problem that has plagued players as diverse as Hillary Clinton and Angelina Jolie.

Then comes Gal Gadot, giving us the Atticus Finch of superheroes. One element of the film's great success — \$254 million in opening week international box office and counting — is certainly that Diana is the most capable and compassionate person in the movie.

An optimistic superhero? How refreshing.

Jenkins doesn't quietly shift the emphasis of the film over to Pine, either. This time Steve Trevor is the accessory.

He's got the access Diana needs to deploy her super skills in the right arena and he is basically there to move the plot along.

Although "Wonder Woman" is rated PG-13, it's not for all children. It has a scary supernatural villain and authentic WWI battle scenes. If your kids still hide their eyes when the flying monkeys take off with Toto, they're not ready.

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It will be interesting to see how Wonder Woman performs in the company of her DC Comics colleagues. She may end up carrying these lesser immortals.

This is a woman who can annihilate the box office on her own.