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'As You Wish': Cary Elwes on The Making of 'The Princess Bride' (INTERVIEW)

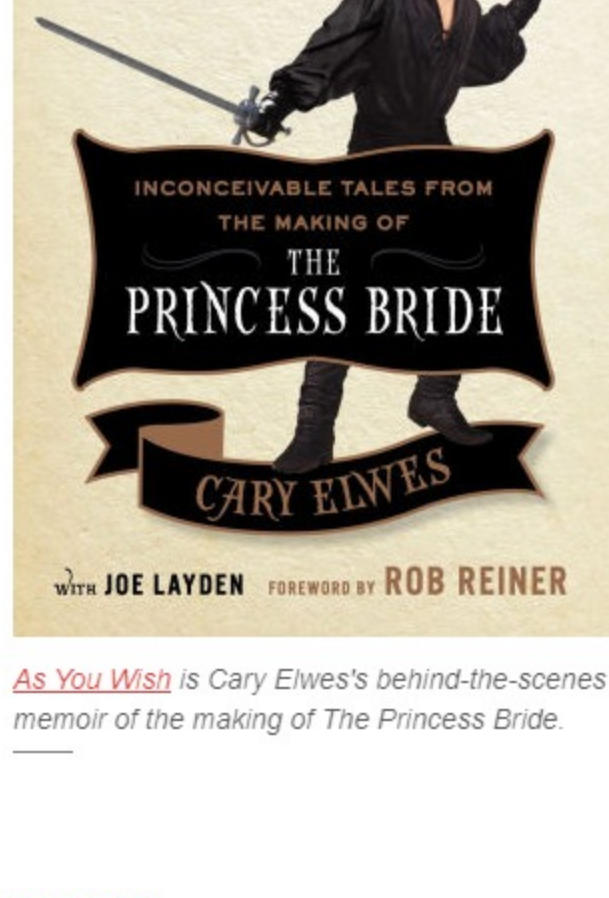
Westley from "The Princess Bride" wrote a fan-pleasing book about what happened behind the scenes of the 1987 cult classic.

LAURIE ULSTER · OCT 13, 2014

"Have fun storming the castle!"

If that rings a bell, it's because you're among the legions of people who love — and love to quote — *The Princess Bride*. The movie is as memorable to its fans now as it was confusing to the studio's marketers when it was released back in 1987. Was it a romantic drama? A comedy? A fairy tale? A period piece? A satire? All of the above? The film baffled them so much that the initial posters promoting it featured silhouettes of Fred Savage and [Peter Falk](#), whose scenes provided the bookends to the story but weren't actually part of the adventure and comedy combination that gave it its magic.

This was just one of the tidbits revealed in [As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales from the Making of The Princess Bride](#), a new book by Cary Elwes. Elwes starred as the dashing Westley, who transforms from farm boy to swashbuckling hero and fights in battle for true love. After being asked by countless fans what it was like making the movie, Elwes decided to take the bull by the horns and write a book about it.



As You Wish is Cary Elwes's behind-the-scenes memoir of the making of *The Princess Bride*.

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The Princess Bride is now a cult classic. Written by master screenwriter William Goldman (*Marathon Man*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All The President's Men*, *Misery*) and directed by comic genius [Rob Reiner](#) (*This Is Spinal Tap*, *Stand By Me*, *When Harry Met Sally*), the movie starred everyone from newcomer [Robin Wright](#) in her first film role to veteran [Billy Crystal](#), playwright Wallace Shawn, and biggest of all, wrestler [Andre The Giant](#) (at almost 7 feet tall and 500 pounds).

It also generated line after line of addictively quotable dialogue:

"Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father: prepare to die."

"Inconceivable!" [Elwes](#): "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

"Thank you so much for bringing up such a painful subject. While you're at it, why don't you give me a nice paper cut and pour lemon juice on it?"

Equally unforgettable: The Rodents of Unusual Size, the Pit of Despair, the Six-Fingered Man, and the ups & downs of being mostly dead.



Elwes on his last day of shooting with (from left) producer Andy Scheinman, Robin Wright, André the Giant, Chris Guest, and Rob Reiner. (Photo: Courtesy Simon & Schuster)

Inspired by a 25-year cast reunion, Elwes reached out to costars like Mandy Patinkin, [Christopher Guest](#), Billy Crystal, Carol Kane, Chris Sarandon, and Robin Wright, as well as director Rob Reiner, producer [Norman Lear](#), and writer William Goldman to see what hidden gems he could uncover. The result: the book is almost as much fun as the movie itself. Broken toes, real sword fighting with training from experts who worked with everyone from [Erol Flynn](#) to Darth Vader, little people in rat costumes who got arrested the night before shoot days, romantic kisses that went on and on, and laughter that ruined take after take are just the beginning. We pounced on the opportunity to ask Elwes a few questions, and as we wished, he answered:

Describe the impact of *The Princess Bride* on your life, both professionally and personally.

It changed my life in a profound way. It gave me the career I have today and the wonderful life I have.

What story from the book do you think will be the most surprising to fans of the movie?

Maybe that [President Clinton](#) is a fan of the movie.

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How about for you: in doing all of these interviews, what did you learn about the movie that you didn't already know?

I had forgotten about the time Mandy Patinkin and I had to improvise a new piece into the duel sequence going up the castle steps at the very last minute. And somehow we pulled it off!

What do you think *Princess Bride* fans will be happiest to learn about the movie?

It really was that fun to make. I can hardly remember a day without laughter. And it all started with Rob Reiner, who is just a beautiful guy.



Director Rob Reiner and Billy Crystal as Miracle Max. Elwes writes that Crystal's outtakes as Miracle Max were so hysterical he and Reiner had to watch them from a monitor outside the soundstage. (Photo: Courtesy Simon & Schuster)

If you could have traded places with one of your cast mates and played another character in the movie, who would it be? Why?

It is hard for me to envision anyone else in those roles. I think that is why the movie is so timeless. Rob's casting was brilliant in every role.

Who was the most fun to work with on the set? Who was the most intimidating?

Everyone checked their egos at the door. Rob would gather everyone for dinner in his hotel suite four nights a week. That's the kind of set it was.

You wrote about spending a lot of time with Andre the Giant, and being very affected by him. What is something Andre's fans don't know about him?

He was as gentle a soul as you'll ever want to meet. A real gentle giant with a heart as big as an ox. I miss him to this day.



Elwes attempting the Heimlich maneuver on his friend and costar André. (Photo: Simon & Schuster)

Out of all the scenes in the movie, what was the most fun to shoot? Why?

Miracle Max's hovel was probably the funniest. Rob basically told Billy Crystal to throw away his lines and just improvise which is when he started doing medieval Yiddish 'stand-up'. First Rob was banished from the set, as his laugh is very robust. Then I was next since I had to play dead with my eyes closed. He was that hysterical even to listen to. Mandy bruised a rib trying not to laugh.



Elwes, Robin Wright, Mandy Patinkin, Chris Sarandon, Wallace Shawn, Carol Kane, and Billy Crystal celebrating the 25th anniversary of *The Princess Bride* at the New York Film Festival in 2012. (Photo by Stephen Lovekin/Getty Images, Courtesy Simon & Schuster)

There is much more within the pages of this book to delight and fascinate fans of the movie. One of our favorite surprises comes in the scene where Count Rugen knocks Westley out with the butt of his sword; there's a reason Westley's fall was so convincing. The rest you'll have to read for yourself.

And remember: "Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while."

The Making of "The Princess Bride" (TV-14, 03:02) Actor Cary Elwes, who played Westley in the 1987 cult classic "The Princess Bride," discusses writing his book *As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales from the Making of The Princess Bride*. (Video Courtesy of Simon & Schuster)

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