

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Destiny</b>
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Cinematheque Ontario/a division of Toronto International Film Festival Group</i>
Date	1999 Oct 26
Type	intertitles
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	11
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Der müde tod (Destiny), Lang, Fritz, 1921

## DESTINY (DER MÜDE TOD)

Directed by Fritz Lang

Germany 1921 91 minutes (when shown @ 20 fps)

35mm print from the Munich Filmmuseum; recommended speed 18 fps.

Presented by Cinematheque Ontario (Toronto) on October 26, 1999 as part of the "Designs of Destiny: The Cinema of Fritz Lang" retrospective held October 22 - December 8, 1999.

English translations prepared by Doris Wackerle (Toronto) from the German intertitles corresponding to the Munich Filmmuseum's print.

## DESTINY (DER MÜDE TOD)

### The Characters:

The couple in love - Lil Dagover & Walter Janssen

Death - Bernhard Goetzke

The mayor - Hans Sternberg

The priest - Carl Rueckert

The Solicitor - Max Adalbert

The Doctor - Wilhelm Diegelmann

The Teacher - Erich Pabst

The pharmacist - Karl Platon

The tailor - Hermann Picha

The Undertaker - Paul Rehkopt

The night watchman - Max Pfeiffer

The beggar - Georg John

The Innkeeper's wife - Lydia Potechina

The mother - Grete Berger

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Somewhere and sometime...

### Collaborators:

#### Sets:

German part - Walter Roehrig

Oriental part - Hermann Warm

Venetian part -

Chinese part - Robert Herlth

Photography - Erich Nitzschmann, Hermann Saalfrank, F.A. Wagner

Light design - Robert Hegewald

The real oriental and Chinese art works and costumes belong to the Heinrich Umlauff Museum in Hamburg

Written and directed by Fritz Lang



A German folk song in six verses

First Verse

Through a valley to the village  
asleep beneath the slope  
There came a fresh, young couple  
in love and full of hope

But from the trees  
fall golden leaves  
like tears in evening's breath  
On their path there stood  
Silent, hooded  
Waiting for them, D E A T H

The village that time forgot.

Every evening, these highly respected citizens gather at the Golden Unicorn for a drink or two.

His Eminence the mayor.

His Excellency the priest.

The learned doctor.

The objective solicitor.

and the new teacher.

Normally, the wise old woman who lit the lamps, would have heard the latest news every evening, but for some time now these councilors have spoken of only one thing: The stranger and nothing but the stranger.

One day the Undertaker was asked for directions to the town. The stranger was curiously familiar to him although he had never set eyes on him before.

Who owns the land beside the cemetery?

And he answered, the city magistrates have resolved to extend the cemetery. I hardly believe that the city magistrates would agree to hand you the deed for the future cemetery lands. Why the devil would you insist on that piece of land.



I am a tired wanderer, and I'd like to plant a garden there.

Beside the cemetery?

At the meeting of the town council, the stranger's petition was hotly disputed, but in the end, the gold the stranger was offering was too tempting.

The stranger's petition was unanimously passed and the cemetery property was leased to him for 99 years.

But the joy over the sudden swelling of the town coffers was not unspoiled. Just as the foreigner built an insurmountable wall of brick around his property, he built a wall, using his mysterious character, between himself and the townspeople.

Go and see for yourself, Gentlemen. I have walked completely around the wall and could not find a single door or gate.

Save yourself the trouble! The way through this wall is known only to me.

And is it true that no-one has found a single door in that eerie wall?

It's an old tradition at the Unicorn that every young couple take a drink from the bridal cup... and you can tell from the tips of your noses that you two are in love.

Excuse me. Can you tell me where my fiance has gone?

My child, your fiance left with that stranger who sat with him at the table.

Listen people and let me tell  
It has rung ten times, the bell  
Keep away from wine and drink  
Otherwise to hell you'll sink

There are some herbs, when picked by the light of the full moon, have magical powers. Spring root and Solomon's seal. Goat-thorn and goldenrod. Nobody knows more about that than the old apothecary.

The old apothecary has lived here since he was a small boy, back when it was his father's shop But this is the first time that a young girl has crossed its threshold

Child, child you're shaking with fever. Wait, I'll brew you some strong tea and you'll soon feel better.



Psalm 19

Put me like a seal on your heart  
and like seal on your arm  
For love is as strong as death  
And its zeal as strong as hell  
It's glow is fiery  
and a flame of God

For Love is as strong as Death

Listen people and let it be said,  
The bell has rung eleven...

What are you looking for in my kingdom child? I haven't yet called for you

I want to go where my beloved is

Where is he, who you've taken from me

I haven't taken him, his time had come

What you see here are people's lives  
they shine and burn for a time  
until God decides to extinguish them

Believe me, my task is not easy. It's a curse. I've grown so tired of  
watching human suffering. In return for obeying God's will, I am hated.

And is there no way of bringing an extinguished flame back to life, Death.?

And is there no way to defeat you? **I BELIEVE, LOVE is stronger than DEATH!**

Is **YOUR** love stronger than **DEATH**?  
Do you wish to fight the eternal one?  
My respects if **YOU** can defeat **ME**

See these three flames almost extinguished  
I put their fate in your hands  
If you can save just one  
I will give you back your beloved

To prayers all believers



Ramadhan

Allah, Allah, Allah  
Mohammed  
Allah

Zobeide, the sister of the Caliph

You, Frank.

There is no other god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet.

Are you crazy? Do you want to jeopardize both of us?

I haven't seen you since Ramadhan began. Night after night I've waited for your message...but nothing comes

Tonight I'll send Aischa... But now -I swear - if you don't leave the Mosque, you'll be caught.

A Frank! An Infidel! A Heathen!

An infidel has desecrated the Mosque

Get out! Do not desecrate this holy ground with the blood of a pagan.

The Caliph.

Zobeide? My Sister?

We don't know where the Frank lives, but I have a suggestion, Caliph.

Of what concern to me is the fate of this infidel? I sought nothing more than to protect the sanctity of the Mosque from his blood.

Then it would please you to know, that the violator of the Mosque will not escape punishment.

We've found his trail. And I've circled the city with guards. Any attempt to escape will deliver him right into my hands.

You must go to him, Aischa, and bring him back to me along the secret path.

Here it is safe - You wouldn't expect the quarry to hide in the hunter's home!



El Mot, The Gardener.

When night falls come along the secret path! The lady of the palace will hide you until the mob's anger has subsided.

Circle the palace of Lady Zobeide...Let anyone in, but no one out!"

That Night.

Come with me. I can conceal you until the guard becomes sleepy.

The Caliph

What is that?

They're probably hunting some mangy dog.

Your orders have been followed, master!

The night is beautiful, sister...I'd like to watch it from the roof of the Palace. Will you join me?

Who's digging in the garden at this hour?

El Mot, the gardener, wanted to surprise you.

Madonna Fiametta

Giovancesco

Girolamo

I'm so pleased to see a smile on those lips, my beautiful bride to be.

How close men come to death without even knowing it. They believe they have all the time in the world and meanwhile, they haven't even as much time as the rose they're playing with.

Master Giovancesco is politically quite suspect among the 14 councilors.  
Too much in fact. He won't live to see the next sunrise.

There's a reason why I'm the best fencer among the 14 councilors...And when Carnival gets the blood going, it's not difficult to fall into hands which can sometimes be deadly.



I realize that you despise me, Madonna Fiametta. And you're free to do so...that is at least until the moment of our wedding.

I hope you also have a smile for me  
and a rose, as you do for this other man  
who's already as good as dead.

Cockfight

Letters...

This letter is for master Girolamo.

Tell him, that I send it with my sweetest smile.

Take this letter as quickly as you can to Master Giovancesco... secretly. No one is to know of it, especially, not Master Girolamo.

Have the moor come here.

I, Madonna Fiametta, invite you this evening to be my guest. I think we have much to say to one another. Come at 10. The maid will direct you.

Madonna Fiametta sends this letter with her sweetest smile.

Do you have a second letter to deliver?

I have an enemy, who I have invited to be my guest this evening - and he must not leave the house alive. Is that understood?

Flee my love. The Council of 14 wishes you dead, and Girolamo would be your executioner! Avoid all contact. Flee now and don't return until I send word! The fate he has prepared for you will take place tonight. I kiss your eyes and your heart! Yours truly, Fiametta.

I'll lead him with the tip of my saber to there, where you're standing...and when he has his back to you...

Madonna Fiametta sends this to you.

And this letter...

I, Madonna Fiametta, invite you this evening to be my guest. I think we have much to say to one another. Come at 10. The maid will direct you.



Take my advice; not a word! If your life and Madonna Fiametta's honour mean anything to you, not a peep. Whatever happens, keep silent.

10 o'clock

Carne vale!

NOW!

To you most worthy of praise,  
You gift of a thousand years,  
You lamp of wisdom,  
You Jewel,  
Tomorrow is my birthday and I have decreed that happiness reign throughout the middle kingdom! And I wish on my birthday, that you, the pearl of all magicians, relieve me of this imperial boredom with original magical tricks from the treasury of your enlightened spirit.  
With Kind Regards  
Djoij Shijati Watig  
Emperor

P.S. Should YOU also bore me, you most worthy of praise, I would, most regrettably, have to have you beheaded.  
The above signed

[Repeated until ...magicians]

Tiao Tsien! Liang!  
Tiao Tsien! Liang!

Please bring my Sunday wand; the one made of jade.

Whereby the honourable A Hi liberates himself from that which upsets him.

We're leaving

The Son of Heaven!

The Emperor's Archer...

Son of Heaven, forgive this unclean toad, unworthy of licking the dust from your feet. A Hi has not been spotted on any road.



Son of Heaven, excuse this miserable worm at your feet! Not a trace of A Hi on all the rivers.

A Hi!

Hurry up with the magic.

Abracadabra

Witches fat

Three times a black cat!!!

You most sublime Son of Heaven! That you may be secure from your enemies for all time, I give you a fully organized army!

Bring the Son of Heaven your gift.

That's going to be quite expensive.

My dear A Hi, your gift is pretty, but your courier is even prettier. I'll keep her too.

Son of Heaven, she is a small toad unworthy of your greatness. Allow me instead to offer you this magic horse. Nothing like it exists in the whole world.

My dear A Hi, I am most pleased with you! I'll keep the horse...and the girl.

"Most Sublime Master, that is not possible. I can't do without the girl in my magic show.

So, you can't? Listen carefully, how well you can! Either...

...or!

Son of Heaven, your persuasive powers are irresistible.

Take him to the highest Pagoda. At dawn, behead him.

You must make her obedient to me, A Hi, or else...well, you know.

You'll help me, won't you?

Be reasonable Tiao Tsien! What can the poor Liang offer you, that the emperor cannot.

Give me back my magic wand!

You, you miserable, disgusting Cactus, you!!!



The Escape

The Chase

We'll have to continue on foot, Liang! The path becomes too narrow.

My piece of A Hi's jade wand grows smaller, every time I use it

Farther, farther.

They're on our heels

Demons of Fire. Block their path with flames.

Night

Take A Hi's magic horse and bring them both to me...dead or alive!

The magic horse.

Now do you see why, my child, I am so tired of my duty. I am eternally undefeatable . . . Return to the living and live!

Give my beloved back his life.

One final possibility! Bring me, in one hour, another life, not yet spent; one before which years, days, hours lie. Only then will I give your beloved his life again.

Eleven o'clock! Beware the fire and the light, less someone suffers.

Praise God the All-powerful!

Death took my beloved from me...I wanted to follow him!

Old man, you've enjoyed life long enough! What else can it offer you?

Give me your life...Give me those few days, which remain for you.  
Help me to save the life of my beloved.

Not one day, not one hour, not one breath!!!

The Beggar!



Beggar, do you want an end to your misery?

Give me you life!

Not one day, not one hour, not one breath!!!

The Hospital

The mother is well and the baby is healthy...But the young man, brought in earlier, he passed away shortly before 10.

Dear God, the poor lad! So young and already dead!

Leave us here, we who would be happy not to see another morning. Death has no time for us.

If you're fed up with your life - who of you would give it to me - out of compassion?

That was the last!

My child!

Another life, not yet spent...

I can't defeat you at this price. Now take my life too. For without my beloved, it's worthless to me.

I'll bring you to him, your beloved.

Who throws his life away, will win it...

Gather 'round, people and hear what is said  
When the clock strikes twelve, then you're dead  
Ghosts and spooks may set new goals  
But in the end, you'll lose your souls.