

Plagiarism? That's Cold

By Reg P. Wydeven
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While channel surfing a few weeks ago, I came across one of my favorite 'Seinfeld' episodes. In this particular show, Elaine is tasked with helping her boss, J. Peterman of the clothing catalog fame, write his autobiography.

Elaine feels Peterman's life is too boring and he needs better stories. As an example, she explained how Kramer escaped a fight with a gang by inadvertently flashing their gang sign. At Elaine's suggestion, Peterman decides to use Kramer's stories for his autobiography, so he buys them from him for \$750.

Well, if fellow autobiographer Isabella Tanikumi is successful in her lawsuit against Disney, it seems that Peterman got the bargain of a lifetime.

Tanikumi sued the Walt Disney Company for \$250 million, claiming the studio based the movie 'Frozen' on her life. The Peruvian author asserts that Disney stole the story, characters, plots and subplots from two of her autobiographical books, "Living My Truth" and "Yearnings of the Heart," that depict her life in the Andes. Tanikumi filed the suit last month in U.S. District Court in New Jersey and accuses Disney of copyright infringement, fraud and plagiarism.

The suit comes as somewhat of a surprise, seeing as the movie features an ice queen with magical powers who is saved by her little sister with the help of a mountain man, a talking snowman and a reindeer. However, Tanikumi's suit actually cites 18 specific instances of where the movie ripped off her memoirs.

According to Tanikumi, in addition to plots and characters, Disney copied her theme that the heroine's "first love played with her affections and did not return her love." She also claims she wrote about one sister injuring the other and going into hiding because of her shame.

What's not surprising is that Disney disputes Tanikumi's claims. A spokesman for the studio stated that the suit is "beyond ridiculous" and Tanikumi needs to "let it go." This is a particularly comical quote, as 'Let it Go' is the title of a smash hit song from the film. Disney contends that 'Frozen' was inspired by 'The Snow Queen,' which is a fairy tale written by Hans Christian Andersen in 1844.

'Frozen' was a box office juggernaut, generating \$1.2 billion worldwide, making it the most successful animated movie of all time. As a result, 'Frozen' merchandise flew off shelves and Disney plans to follow up with a Broadway adaptation, a theme park ride and a 2015 sequel. In addition to the \$250 million in damages, Tanikumi's suit seeks an injunction that would force Disney to halt further marketing efforts.

In one episode of Seinfeld, Kramer attends a New York Yankees fantasy camp, to which George replies, Kramer's "whole life is a fantasy camp." I would love to see what kind of movie Disney could come up with using Kramer's memoirs.