



Prince of Persia: Sacrifice, Loyalty, Familial Love

I want to be straight with you. I feel it necessary to preface this review by saying that Disney's *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* goes so far beyond the realm of reality that it borders on absurdity, and that there is very little "Disney" quality to the movie except for the astounding special effects. That being said, I must confess that I found myself thoroughly captivated, once I suspended my utter disbelief, and in the end, enjoyed the movie, much to my surprise.



Prince of Persia is based on a popular video game, created by Jordan Mechner, who also contributed to the development of the script for the film. The movie focuses on a prince named Dastan (Jake Gyllenhaal) who is framed for the murder of his adopted father, the King of Persia. Dastan is forced to flee with enemy princess Tamina (Gemma Arterton), while he is being hunted by his uncle Nizam (Ben Kingsley), and his two brothers Tus (Richard Coyle) and Garsiv (Toby Kebbell).

There is much more at stake than simply Dastan's life, however. In the Princess' possession is a sacred dagger, of which she is the sole guardian, a role bestowed upon her by the gods. If the dagger ends up in the wrong hands, it could ultimately result in the world's demise.

As tends to be the case with films set in kingdoms, much of the drama and action is centered on a struggle for control over the kingdom, as well as the dagger. Now what I am about to say may seem a bit odd, but I could not help but draw parallels between the film and our struggles with our own American government. I know it sounds strange, but bear with me for a moment.

First, one of the comedic characters in the film is a man named Sheik Amar (Alfred Molina), an entrepreneur who used his innovative abilities to create a thriving city and turn a great profit, reminiscent of the modern-day capitalist. Of course, Amar's greatest fear is the government learning of his success and taxing him until he is broke, and he makes it a point to mention that in nearly every scene. Sound familiar?

Next, the man who turns out to be the real enemy vying for control of the kingdom (and I will not reveal who he is to avoid spoiling the film) believes in policies similar to those espoused by America's own political elite. He asserts that Dastan is an enemy to the kingdom, and as such, does not have a right to a fair trial. Instead, he argues that Dastan should be immediately imprisoned and executed. Fortunately for the kingdom, Tus, the newly anointed King, believes that the rules of the Kingdom should always be followed, no matter the scenario. This debate is similar to that which we've recently encountered on



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whether terrorist suspects should be denied the right of habeas corpus, and even subjected to [indefinite detention amounting to a life sentence without being brought to trial](#). Those who say that the Constitution should be followed would likely find themselves in agreement with Tus' conclusion.

Also, those who are part of the spiritual order to which Princess Tamina belongs, and who are believed to be protecting the sacred dagger, have been infiltrated by the enemy. When the Princess discovers this, she remarks, "We are no longer pure." The parallels between this religious group and Reverend Wright's Church of Christ are uncanny.

Finally, the man who is hell-bent on accessing control over the kingdom cares very little about the consequences for the citizens, which is ultimately Armageddon, also known as "fundamental transformation." I will leave that parallel to your imagination.

Whether writers Boaz Yakin, Doug Miro, Carlo Bernard, and Jordan Mechner had any of this in mind when scripting this story is unknown, and even unlikely. Perhaps I struggled so hard at the onset of the film to find some common ground in order to make it a more pleasant experience that I perceived things that were not truly there. You be the judge.

In addition to potential political parallels, there are clear connections to Christianity as well. The Princess explains to Dastan how she became guardian of the dagger. The gods, who were angry with the unending greed and malice in the world, intended to send a sandstorm to destroy it, until she pleaded with them for another chance for the world to prove itself. The story bears clear similarities to Noah's Ark. She later refers to her arrangement with the gods as the "original promise," alluding to the "original sin" of Christianity.

Prince of Persia was directed by Mike Newell, who also directed *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Donnie Brasco*, and was produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, who produced *Armageddon* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Both Newell and Bruckheimer leave their signatures in *Prince of Persia*, the third-dimensional characterization belonging to Newell and the spectacular special effects and over-the-top battles being the brainchild of Bruckheimer. In fact, it was the grandness of the fight scenes, which at times mirrored those found in *The Matrix*, that put me off a bit at the start of the film. Fortunately, the storyline and the characters are engaging enough so that the viewers may find themselves ignoring the absurdities of the battle scenes and instead rooting for those characters with whom they fall in love.

There is very real chemistry between Gyllenhaal and Arterton on screen that makes the verbal dueling between the two both comedic and charming. If you're a hopeless romantic like me, you'll find yourself rooting for the much-delayed kiss.

Unfortunately, the violence and risqué humor in the movie might prohibit *Prince of Persia* from qualifying as a family film. Overall, *Prince of Persia* is about sacrifice, loyalty, and familial love. In the end, truth prevails, and as such, hope is restored. Hopefully, the message will resonate with audiences across the country.



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