

TO SAVE A PRINCESS

by Marin Lepore

Synopsis:

Princess Maya Sage has grown up her whole life following the societal expectations that come from being part of a royal family. Now age 21 and heir to the throne, she must come to terms with her Queen responsibilities, but she questions these traditions when she's suddenly reunited with Princess Rachel Jin, her childhood best friend and teenage first love.

It's a children's animated musical that deals with modern feminist themes such as sexuality, conforming to gender roles, and makes fun of the many patriarchal tropes that come from princess movies; all through the fun filter of adventure, songs, and of course, a cute animal side-kick.

The entire 100 page feature has been written.

FADE IN:

EXT. SAGE PALACE - DAY

A massive palace sits atop a small European town.

INT. SAGE PALACE - BALLROOM - SAME

An elaborate ballroom.

A group of EIGHT YOUNG GIRLS, all different ethnicities and dress styles, stand in a row.

The one in the middle being 11-year-old MAYA SAGE, Caucasian, distracted in her own thoughts. She picks at the uncomfortable dress itching her side.

In front of them stands QUEEN JULIA, 30s, mid lecture. She's a formal and reserved woman you wouldn't believe grew up with dreams.

JULIA

Everything you do in life is a choice. Your success is a conscious effort you must work for, which is why it's important that you all learn how to--

Next to Maya is her best friend, RAE JIN, Asian, also 11. She's an easy-going and excited ball of energy.

Maya turns to Rae and rolls her eyes jokingly, and they both laugh. Maya slowly moves her hand to brush the side of Rae's, but:

JULIA

MAYA!

Maya shoots her attention back to the front. The class giggles.

KID MAYA

Sorry, Mother...

JULIA

Are you even listening?

KID MAYA

Yes.

Julia sighs, unsure how to deal with her child. She takes a deep breath, and recomposes herself.

JULIA
As I was saying...

Julia SINGS.

"PERFECT PRINCESS"

JULIA
Stand up straight, nod to the
right. / Have a firm handshake, but
never too tight. / Learn how to
curtsy, always look groomed. /
Don't cross your legs, and never be
rude.

The whole class follows Julia's various demonstrations on how
to sit, stand, walk, wave, and smile.

JULIA
To be the perfect Princess you must
follow all these rules. / To be the
perfect Princess--

Maya and Rae practice bowing to each other.

KID MAYA
(to Rae)
--God, I really hate this school.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY - **FIVE YEARS LATER**

The class, **now all age 16**, sit at one side of the room, as a
GROUP OF YOUNG MEN enter. One of them being SAMUEL SAGE, 15,
Maya's disruptive younger brother.

TEEN MAYA
Smile at Princes when they walk by.
/ Never be too confident, but never
be shy.

The boys approach the girls and offer their hands to dance.
Maya is reluctantly stuck with Samuel.

TEEN RAE
Hats are for the day, and tiaras at
night. / Learn at least four
languages, and we just might--

All the girls and boys dance together in pairs. Maya and Rae
eye each other across the room, **flirtatious**.

ALL PRINCESSES
 --Be the perfect Princess for a
 Prince to come and save.

TEEN SAMUEL
 (to Maya/mocking)
 Be the perfect Princess, you can
 never misbehave.

Maya stomps on Samuel's foot. He whines like a baby.

TEEN SAMUEL
 Mother!

They both look over to Julia, who gives a dirty, stern look,
 then looks away.

INT. SAGE PALACE - MAYA'S ROOM - DAY

Maya and Rae lay side by side on the carpet of Maya's
 extravagant room. They're holding hands and staring up at the
 ceiling.

TEEN MAYA
 Always do this, and never do that.
 / Policing every word and how I
 act.

TEEN RAE
 At least when I'm with you, I feel
 free-- / From that old fashioned
 insanity.

They sit up together and look at each other.

TEEN MAYA
 Rae, you're the perfect Princess
 and you never have to change.

Maya puts her hand on Rae's cheek, Rae leans into it. They
 clench their hands tighter together.

TEEN RAE
 And you're the perfect Princess,
 you don't need to be afraid.

Eye contact, calm breaths... They both lean forward to kiss,
 but before they can--

Samuel BUSTS through the door!

Maya and Rae let go of each other. He didn't see anything.

TEEN SAMUEL
Hey, is Nikko in here?!

TEEN MAYA
Oh my God, Samuel, can't you knock
for once?!

Samuel spots NIKKO, A SMALL TORTOISE, crawling through the rug. He runs up and roughly snatches it up with one hand.

TEEN SAMUEL
Nikko, bad tortoise! You need to
stop running away!

Nikko squirms in Samuel's hand, short stubby legs flailing.

TEEN MAYA
Get! Out!

Maya pushes Samuel out and closes the door in his face. She turns back to Rae and Rae laughs. Maya laughs too.

INT. SAGE PALACE - ROYAL BEDROOM - NIGHT - *STILL IN SONG

Julia and her husband, KING ASTER, 40s, are in their bedroom. Whispers are barely heard.

JULIA
She's throwing it away and she
doesn't care.

ASTER
Weren't you like this at her age?

JULIA
I chose my responsibilities. This
is different.

ASTER
Are you sure?

Julia huffs.

Around the corner, Maya was listening.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM - *STILL IN SONG

Maya sits alone in her bed, reading a handwritten letter sent from Rae. **The words "I'm sorry" are visible** before she folds it up.

Maya stares up at her ceiling with a detailed mural of the Kingdom, the town, all the people and Royalty before her...

TEEN MAYA
(to self)
To be the perfect...

She sits up.

EXT. SAGE PALACE - GARDEN - DAY - DAYS LATER

Maya and Rae sit on the bench of an outside garden, **next to a bush of blue violets**. Rae's woven some of the flowers into a crown. Their singing is more like dialogue, here. Serious.

TEEN MAYA
I can't be the perfect daughter--

TEEN RAE
Love, you don't know what you heard.

TEEN MAYA
But you're moving when the week ends--

TEEN RAE
I thought we could have made it work.

Maya stands up to leave, and Rae is left alone, defeated. One of the ROYAL SERVANTS walks up to assist her out.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY - 5 YEARS LATER

Present day.

Maya, **now age 21**, in full gown and makeup, dances with her mother. For the first time, Julia(now 40s) looks genuinely happy and proud.

MAYA
Stand up straight, nod to the right. / Have a firm handshake, but never too tight. / Learn how to curtsy, always look groomed. / Don't cross your legs, and never be rude.

JULIA
And you're the perfect Princess--

MAYA
--I'll be the perfect Princess.

MAYA & JULIA
We'll make this Kingdom proud!

END SONG.

FILM TITLE: TO SAVE A PRINCESS.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM - DAY - PRESENT

Maya sits at the desk of her room. She's wearing a casual T-shirt and shorts as she writes a letter.

She stares at the two words on paper: "**Dearest Rae**"

But she folds it up and tosses it into a small drawer full of several other unsent letters. Well, a **whole pile** of unsent letters.

A KNOCK on the door.

At that, Maya SHOOTs up off her desk, slams the desk drawer shut, and scrambles to her feet.

MAYA
AhJKDFHGSJshkjdf--

She leaps across the room to grab a long, formal dress and sloppily tosses it over her t-shirt and shorts.

MAYA
Yes, one second, sorry!

She quickly fixes her mussed hair, and darts back to the door. Attempting to mask the fact she's out of breath, she opens it.

NIA(30), one of the lead palace assistants, but really just Maya's closest friend, stands at the door for her.

MAYA
Oh, good, it's just you.

Nia looks down at Maya's outfit, then back up to Maya.

NIA
Is that a t-shirt?

The t-shirt neck is totally visible under the dress.

MAYA

I thought you were my mother.

NIA

Ha. Well, your mother wanted me to give you these for approval before we send them out.

Nia hands her a stack of invitation-cards regarding Prince Samuel's coronation ceremony.

MAYA

It's not even my celebration.

NIA

But it's a family celebration.

Nia notices something is off.

NIA

Are you okay?

A beat.

MAYA

I don't know. Well--

Nia immediately drops the servant-act and lets herself into Maya's room, pushing past her. She flops onto the bed.

NIA

Yaas, okay, tell me what's up, girl! But first you should fix whatever...

(gestures to Maya's outfit
and hair and face)

...you have going on here.

Maya smiles in relief, and closes the door behind her.

She SINGS to Nia.

"THE HEIR"

MAYA

I've always felt wrong, in the palace, living like this. / It's always felt fake, and obtuse, and unfair. / To live above you, and all people, just as worth it-- / Is a life I just cannot understand, or bear.

Maya runs up to her window, pulls back the always closed curtains, and stares off the balcony to the miles of unknown land in front of her.

MAYA

I want to fly away, / Live in a
different place, / Where all that
aches-- / is left behind.

INT. SAMUEL'S ROOM - SAME

Samuel, **now 20**, looks at himself in the mirror as he puts on a fake paper crown. He's wearing a blanket around his neck like a cape.

His pet tortoise, Nikko, crawls out from under the bed.

SAMUEL

I've always felt strong, in my
title, and my riches. / And since I
was born, I've been the throne's
heir. / To rule this whole Kingdom,
and have all that power-- / Is
something I'm ready to take, and
not share.

Samuel runs up to his own window, always wide open, and stares off to the town below him. Nikko rolls his eyes at Samuel.

SAMUEL

I will own this land, / I will be a
man, / And I don't have a plan, /
But it's all mine!

Samuel grabs Nikko off the ground, puts him in a little pouch, and clips it around his waist like a fanny-pack. It's basically a mini baby carrier, but for a tortoise.

SAMUEL

Come on, boy. Don't look like that,
it's a big day!

On Nikko: He doesn't react.

SAMUEL

I said come on!

INT. MAYA'S ROOM - *STILL IN SONG

On Maya's bed, Nia looks through the letters that Maya has been writing.

MAYA

We haven't spoken since my
mother... I don't even know if...

NIA

If you're asking me, you could
leave, go and find her. / You're an
adult, and the Queen shouldn't
care. / If that's what you want,
what you dream, and inside you-- /
You shouldn't feel trapped, I can
help you prepare.

MAYA

You're right, I'll fly away, / To a
different place, / I can go find
Rae, / Leave this behind.

INT/EXT. SAGE PALACE - VARIOUS - MONTAGE - *STILL IN SONG

Days later, 1) the whole palace begins preparing for Samuel's official coronation celebration, while 2) Maya secretly plans to run away.

INTERCUT SAMUEL/MAYA:

SAMUEL

And I will be King!

MAYA

And I will be free!

SAMUEL

(swinging scepter)
How do I use this thing?

MAYA

(packing bags)
They won't know when I leave.

SAMUEL

I've waited my life.

MAYA

I will not play my part.

SAMUEL

They will give me a wife.

MAYA

I can have a new start.

EXT. SAGE PALACE - ENTRANCE - DAY - *STILL IN SONG

WORKERS set up elaborate welcome decorations outside the front gates of the palace. The whole family (Julia, Aster, Maya, and Samuel) are together overseeing the progress.

A royal MALE MESSENGER, rides up on a horse, its mane elaborately braided.

MALE MESSENGER

Urgent news from the high council!

MAYA & SAMUEL

And I am ready now, / I will take a
bow, / I will show them how, /
It'll be just fine!

The Messenger hops off his horse, greets the Royal Family by kissing Julia and Maya on the hand. He opens his scroll.

MALE MESSENGER

(reading)

After years of deliberation, in an effort to pride progress and inclusivity, starting this day forward, the heir to the throne will now be changed from the First Son, to the First Born, regardless of gender.

MAYA & SAMUEL

Wait, what?!

END SONG.

INT. SAGE PALACE - VARIOUS

The Sage Family all walk through the palace, voices overlapping. Frantic workers are already taking down the Samuel-related decorations after hearing the news.

JULIA

Maya, this is so wonderful. For women everywhere!

ASTER

We've been waiting for this moment.

JULIA
You'll be the perfect Queen.

MAYA
Wait, no, I haven't even...

SAMUEL
Um, HELLO? What does this even mean
about me?

They stop at a huge banner titled "SAMUEL SAGE, KING OF" with
the rest already being painted over.

ASTER
You can still marry into another
family. Anyway, back to Maya, dear--

JULIA
Since you're already 21, we can
have your ceremony immediately.

ASTER
There was no rush before, but now
you really do need to marry.

JULIA
We can invite all the Princes for a
big dance. You can speed date, or
swing, is that what you call it
nowadays?

MAYA
No, wait, I'm not marrying a
Prince.

JULIA
Don't push it, this is already a
huge step. Maybe in fifty more
years, your own daughter can choose
to rule alone, but for now there
must be a King.

ASTER
It adds credibility. Even if he
doesn't do anything.

MAYA
You both know that's not what I
meant.

A beat. Maya and Julia share a look with each other.

JULIA
Maya, please, not this again.