

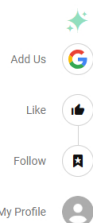


If You Love 'Mulan,' Check Out This Netflix Royal Romance K-Drama



By Rachel Sandell Published Aug 14, 2023, 9:15 PM EDT

Rachel Sandell is an experienced editor and proofreader with a love for language and storytelling. A graduate of the creative writing MFA program, The Rainier Writing Workshop, she is the author of five short stories and analyzes the different facets of fiction her spare time. She's also a huge...

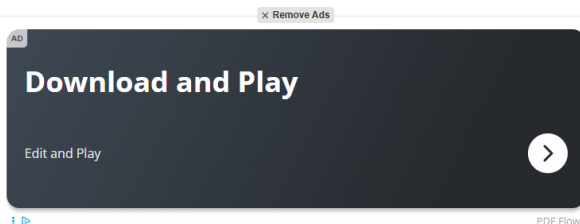


With so many **quality K-dramas out there for lovers of romance**, it can be difficult to find a good place to start. **Netflix alone has a huge selection.** Who has the time to flip through them all? Whether you're a new viewer when it comes to K-dramas, or you're familiar with the more popular shows, new recommendations are always welcome. They can be a great way to find exactly what sort of series you're looking for when it comes to genre, tone, and quality.

For fans of romance, historical settings, action, and political intrigue — as well as fans of *Mulan* — you'll want to watch *The King's Affection*. If that description sounds like a hodgepodge of random bits and pieces... well, you're not wrong, but this Netflix series brings all these aspects together perfectly to create a show that's engrossing and endlessly entertaining.

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What Is 'The King's Affection' About?



Set in the Joseon period, between the mid-16th and mid-17th century, *The King's Affection* counterintuitively begins with a king's lack of affection. The crown prince's wife gives birth to a son, continuing the line of heirs — but the new mother's relief doesn't last long. She ends up giving birth to a daughter as well. Because twins are considered a bad omen, the crown prince is ordered by the king to execute his own daughter, burying her existence in the cover story that the newborn prince was the only child born in the palace that day. In a desperate attempt to save her daughter's life, the princess fakes the death of the unwanted twin and sends her away. Though she won't grow up knowing her true family, at least she'll be able to live. The twins spend the first years of their lives apart, living completely separate lives.

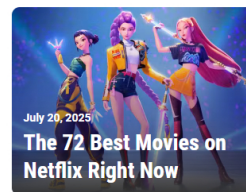


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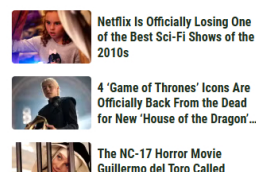
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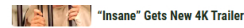


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Years later, the young girl, now a court maid named Dam-i, has a chance encounter with the crown prince Hwi. They are stunned to see that they are identical, and without knowing how this could possibly be, Hwi asks for Dam-i's help. They are to switch clothes for the day so that Hwi can sneak out of the palace. Dam-i becomes Hwi's friend through the mysterious fact of their resemblance, and things start to look up for her when she meets a nice boy named Ji-un, and the two start having feelings for each other.

Tragedy strikes when, during one of their switches, Hwi is mistaken for Dam-i. In a horrific case of **mistaken identity**, the prince is killed, leaving Dam-i stuck in her role as Hwi and unable to resume her normal life. She is forced to adjust to the politics of the palace, the dangers of royalty, and the complete upending of her life. Now living as Hwi, the "prince" surrounds herself with supporters, but dangers lurk around every corner. As she grows up, she learns how to throw her identity away in the name of survival, along with any hope of romance with Ji-un — that is until he returns to the palace years later, as her tutor. Now, Dam-i (**Park Eun-bin**) is forced to deal not just with the back-stabbing political machinations of court life as a member of the royal line, but also the trappings of romance as she struggles not to fall in love with her tutor (**Rowoon**) and reveal her true identity.

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The Romance At the Center of 'The King's Affection' Is Forbidden



Dam-i is an incredibly dynamic protagonist who moves the story along through demonstrations of her cunning, but also her desire for freedom — even though she knows she can never have it. Throughout the course of the series, she struggles between keeping up the kind but distanced exterior of the crown prince and opening herself up to those around her who care about her deeply. Dam-i's romance with Ji-un is a forbidden one, but it comes with the familiarity of childhood sweethearts — at least, on her end. Ji-un doesn't realize the person he's fallen for is actually the court maid he liked all those years ago; he just knows that he has developed very strong, and very dangerous, feelings for the crown prince.

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The struggle between generations is a common theme among both protagonists' storylines. While Dam-i tries to come to terms with the reality that her father tried to murder her when she was born (what's more, she must live alongside her stern father and political powerhouse grandfather in the palace every single day), Ji-un struggles to forgive his manipulative father after he witnesses him kill a court maid (and suspects he did the same to Dam-i).

Dam-i and her faithful supporters — including servants like Eunuch Hong (**Ko Kyu-pil**) and Court Lady Kim (**Baek Heonju**) and bodyguard Ga-on (**Choi Byung-chan**) who has **secret motivations of his own** — face off against a myriad of antagonists ranging from sniveling to cruel, including an arrogant and violent prince, Dam-i proud and boisterous uncle, and even her own devious grandfather Lord Sangheon (**Son Jong-hak**). Even more colorful characters are introduced through different romantic relations, several of them threatening love

triangles with either Dam-i, who is now of marrying age and must produce an heir, or Ji-un, who has attracted the admiration of a lady of the court. The characters at the core of *The King's Affection*, as well as its story, are completely engrossing, to the point where even side characters and supporting cast members get their moments to shine.

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'The King's Affection' Is About More Than Just Romance



Because the story is set in the Joseon era, its costume design reflects the time period, and the setting itself looks the part. There's much more to the atmosphere of a story than time period and location, though. *The King's Affection* also perfects a blend of genre and tone. As a historical romance, the story has plenty of love interests, but it also includes a heavy dose of action and incorporates suspenseful levels of danger. The **impersonation trope** also has a certain foreboding baked into it, and *The King's Affection* expands that danger tenfold by raising the stakes surrounding Dam-i's true identity.

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A woman disguising herself as a man isn't necessarily a new idea. **Plenty of K-dramas**, and other forms of media, have tackled the subject before, including perhaps the most well-known example of *Mulan*. There are certainly parallels, as Dam-i uses her wits, is a formidable fighter, and stands to lose her life if she's discovered to be a woman. However, Dam-i's story is infused with heavy political intrigue, and romance is a main focus. The tone of the show is also able to switch quite suddenly, but the move from suspenseful to playful, and from romantic to dangerous, is a graceful one. And, as always, this K-drama **slows down and takes its time** when it comes to romantic scenes. Dam-i and Ji-un have adorable romantic chemistry that satisfies romance viewers, and they are both savvy when it comes to outsmarting their foes, which is a huge draw for lovers of political drama.

When it comes to romance, historical settings, and dangerous impersonations, *The King's Affection* incorporates a wide variety of tones seamlessly, and the danger of Dam-i's situation increases not just the political and survival stakes, but the romantic ones as well. With a full cast of interesting characters (many of which have full arcs, even supporting characters), *The King's Affection* effectively tells a tale of longing, love, deception, survival, and self-acceptance, even in the face of incredible peril.

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☰ SUMMARY

- *The King's Affection* on Netflix is a must-watch for fans of romance, historical settings, action, and political intrigue, combining all these aspects perfectly.
- The story follows Dam-i, a court maid who impersonates the crown prince and struggles with forbidden romance, political machinations, and danger.
- The K-drama skillfully blends genres and tones, infusing heavy political intrigue and romance into the story, while the characters and their arcs are compelling and engrossing.

The King's Affection is currently available to stream on Netflix.



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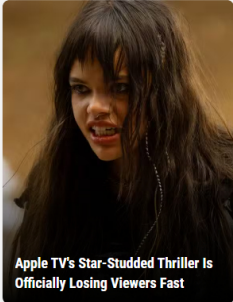


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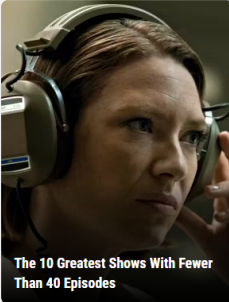
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