

Royal Blood

a feature screenplay synopsis
by Christopher Frost

An outspoken young Indian woman argues for looted heirlooms to be returned to her family -- and all India. Her opponent: the British Museum.

A docent's casual explanation of the expansion of empire evokes a strenuous objection from museum-visitor Sankar Kumar. His refutation of official history sparks his daughter to crusade and reclaim their family status. While her father has long accepted the loss, Vesi sees ongoing injustice and injury. She is enraged that her father sits in dark home in Delhi watching an old TV while family riches sit in a British Museum basement storeroom. Vesi sets out for a David-vs-Goliath confrontation to regain their heirlooms and right some wrongs in history and its telling.

While on a visit to Delhi, she introduces Trey, her London university classmate, to her childhood friend squad. Trey has taken a job in India with a US investment group setting up a genetics lab for vaccine research. Together they take a road trip to the foothills of the Himalayas. There is chemistry between the two, but also conflict over entitlement and the importance of lineage (and, unspoken, caste). They part ways, barely speaking to each other.

Back in London Vesi navigates the museum bureaucracy with her legal claim. She has fire, but not enough power. Outmaneuvered by the old guard, she takes her cause to the court of public opinion, posting on social media. *And that goes viral.*

With Trey's connection to the lab and help from the India's Health Ministry, Vesi organizes a massive public health gene testing program. The campaign will prevent pandemics and, hopefully, confirm her ties to the royal court in the historic Dehradun district.

The results of the DNA testing are broadcast live on a much-hyped Sunday night TV news special. This turns out to be dramatic bombshell! As we expect, Sankar is confirmed the heir. But wait, when did he get tested? And why not Vesi too? The fallout from Vesi's quest upends relationships in the family. Who gets the treasure and who does Vesi get?

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Indiana Jones first appeared on the screen over 40 years ago. The world is ready for a new hero, someone who knows right from wrong, and takes action to fix it. That's Vesi.

The film has moments of humor, suspense, discovery and tenderness. It's overwhelmingly female-centric, but not feminist, not a manifesto. It's a political thriller and coming of age story.

When the credits roll, you'll have a good feeling and plenty to talk about.

