

# Heart of Stone (2023 film)

Heart of Stone is a 2023 American spy action thriller film directed by Tom Harper from a screenplay by Greg Rucka and Allison Schroeder and a story by Rucka. The film stars Gal Gadot, Jamie Dornan, Alia Bhatt (in her Hollywood debut), Sophie Okonedo, and Matthias Schweighöfer. Its plot follows an international intelligence operative who must embark on a dangerous mission to protect a mysterious artificial intelligence system known as "The Heart". She is tasked by the peacekeeping operation known as Charter to keep the object safe from falling into enemy hands. [5]

Development began in December 2020, when Gadot signed on to star. Harper and Netflix were confirmed to serve as director and distributor respectively the following month, with the rest of the cast being confirmed in early 2022. Filming took place in Europe from January to July of that year. With a reported production budget of \$150 million, it is among one of Netflix's most expensive original films. [6]

*Heart of Stone* was released on August 11, 2023, by Netflix. The film received mixed reviews from critics.

#### **Plot**

In the <u>Italian Alps</u> at a ski resort/casino, <u>MI6</u> field agents Parker, Yang, and Bailey, supported by technician Rachel Stone, are tasked with extracting Mulvaney, an arms dealer who is there gambling on a US Navy SEAL combat operation being livestreamed. When Yang is caught trying to sedate Mulvaney, a gunfight breaks out. Parker manages to extract Mulvaney to a cable car while the team heads down the mountain to confront Mulvaney's security.

Stone feigns injury to stay back and contact a mysterious agent named Jack feeding her probability information about how to safely get down the mountain and neutralize the incoming security. She manages to avoid contact with her team, who do not know she is undercover for a different organization; while extracting Mulvaney, he apparently takes cyanide to commit suicide.

#### **Heart of Stone**



Release poster

Directed by	Tom Harper	
Screenplay by	Greg Rucka	
	Allison	
	Schroeder	
Story by	Greg Rucka	
Produced by	David Ellison	
	Dana Goldberg	
	Don Granger	
	Gal Gadot	
	Jaron Varsano	
	Bonnie Curtis	
	Julie Lynn	
Starring	Gal Gadot	
	Jamie Dornan	
	Alia Bhatt	
	Sophie	
	Okonedo	
	Matthias	
	Schweighöfer	

In London, Stone is reprimanded for risking her cover by Nomad, her superior. Concerned by the presence of a hacker she saw in the Alps, Stone discovers she is Keya Dhawan, an orphan with links to Indian criminal syndicates. Stone's organization, "the Charter" (which Bailey suspects exists), leaks MI6 Keya's location and sends them to track her down with Stone still undercover.

Upon arrival, they are ambushed by a squad of mercenaries. Jack orders Stone to evacuate, but she refuses, going back to save the team at the expense of her cover. After they escape, Stone reveals she is a Charter agent.

Parker murders Yang and Bailey, revealing himself as a double agent working with Keya. He admits to covertly murdering Mulvaney as part of his mission to find The Heart, a quantum computer used to guide the Charter's missions. Parker paralyzes Stone with poison before planting a device in her to act as a trojan

Cinematography	George Steel	
Edited by	Mark Eckersley	
Music by	Steven Price <sup>[1]</sup>	
Production companies	Skydance	
	Pilot Wave	
	Mockingbird	
	Pictures	
Distributed by	Netflix	
Release date	August 11, 2023	
Running time	122 minutes <sup>[2]</sup>	
Country	United States	
Language	English	
Budget	\$150 million <sup>[3]</sup>	

horse to infiltrate Charter systems. Once she is recovered and taken to Charter HQ, the device begins breaching security. Stone cuts out the device, but the hackers learn the Heart's location and Nomad (King of Hearts) suspends Stone.

Nomad meets with the other three Kings running the charter, who reveal that Parker was an MI6 agent left for dead during an operation the Charter botched in Chechnya eight years ago. Having learned from the hack that The Heart's command system is located in an <u>airship</u> over Africa, Parker and Keya fly to the ship. Stone intercepts them, but is unable to stop them from seizing The Heart and destroying the ship. She cuts the rope ladder to their helicopter and she and Keya parachute into the desert.

Keya informs Stone that she biometrically encrypted the Heart, so it is useless without her. A passing jeep picks them up, taking them to a village, which turns out to be a setup by Parker. Keya is captured and Stone escapes, eventually being rescued by another Charter operative. Stone goes to Iceland, where Parker is using a university supercomputer to exploit the Heart.

Parker uses the Heart to kill the other three Charter Kings and several operatives as well as trap the Charter in their bunker without an air supply; Keya becomes disillusioned with him as she intended to use the Heart only for financial gain. She helps Stone avoid an explosion set in a decoy location and reroutes her to Parker and the Heart's true location.

Parker realizes Keya has betrayed him, and tries to force her to unencrypt the Heart. Stone arrives in time to rescue her, and manages to kill Parker. Keya uses the Heart to restore oxygen to the bunker, then turns the Heart back over to the Charter.

Four weeks later, Stone visits Keya in prison and offers her a job in the Charter. They then take on another mission as a new team of Stone, Jack and Keya.

#### Cast

- Gal Gadot as Rachel "Nine of Hearts" Stone
- Jamie Dornan as Parker

- Sophie Okonedo as Nomad / "King of Hearts"
- Matthias Schweighöfer as "Jack of Hearts"
- Paul Ready as Bailey
- Jing Lusi as Yang
- BD Wong as "King of Clubs"
- Alia Bhatt as Keya Dhawan
- Archie Madekwe as Ivo
- Enzo Cilenti as Mulvaney
- Jon Kortajarena as the Blond
- Glenn Close as "King of Diamonds"
- Mark Ivanir as "King of Spades"

### **Production**

It was announced in December 2020 that <u>Gal Gadot</u> had signed on to star in the film, which is planned to be the beginning of a franchise in a similar vein to the <u>Mission: Impossible franchise</u>. <u>Tom Harper</u> was in negotiations to direct. The story was conceived by <u>Greg Rucka</u>, and the script was written by him and <u>Allison Schroeder</u>. Harper was confirmed in January 2021, with <u>Netflix</u> acquiring the distribution rights to the film. In February 2022, <u>Jamie Dornan</u> was cast to star alongside Gadot. In March, <u>Alia Bhatt</u>, <u>Sophie Okonedo</u>, <u>Matthias Schweighöfer</u>, <u>Jing Lusi</u> and <u>Paul Ready</u> were added to the cast. The film also marks Bhatt's Hollywood debut. With a reported production budget of \$150 million, it is among one of Netflix's most expensive films.

<u>Principal photography</u> began in the Alpin Arena <u>Schnals</u> (<u>South Tyrol</u>) on January 26, 2022, following in <u>London</u> on March 8, 2022. The second schedule of filming then took place in <u>Reykjavík</u>, <u>Iceland</u> the following month, after which production moved back to London in May, for the succeeding schedule. The fourth schedule took place in <u>Lisbon</u>, Portugal. Filming wrapped on July 28, 2022. [18][19]

#### **Release**

*Heart of Stone* was released by <u>Netflix</u> on August 11, 2023. [20] Within its first two days, the film was number one on the Netflix English-language list with 33.1 million views. [21]

### **Critical reception**

On the <u>review aggregator</u> website <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, 30% of 135 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.9/10. The website's consensus reads: "Gal Gadot remains an entertaining action star, but she's no match for *Heart of Stone's* thinly written characters, generic plot, and rote set pieces." [22] <u>Metacritic</u>, which uses a <u>weighted average</u>, assigned the film a score of 44 out of 100, based on 36 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews. [23]

<u>Time</u>'s <u>Stephanie Zacharek</u> said the film "occupies that vast middle zone of small-screen movies that easily fill the void of a few empty hours, if you happen to have any to spare, though it's nothing you'd carve out time in your schedule to watch." <u>Property of CNN</u> said it "capitalizes on Gadot's inherent likability – a ruthless agent burdened by, yes, a heart – without bringing enough distinctive elements to this exercise to make it feel like much more than a <u>Mission</u> wannabe." <u>The Independent</u>'s Clarisse Loughrey gave it

two out of five stars, writing, "Heart of Stone is an ideological mess. AI is great until it's not, and then it's fine because Gal Gadot can just kick someone in the face. It's conflicted without embracing that conflict, resulting in a film that's really about nothing at all." [26]

Wendy Ide of <u>The Observer</u> gave it three out of five stars, calling the screenplay "a rudimentary thing – scaffolding to support the set pieces – that starts to creak whenever it attempts any depth of character", but praising the action as "terrific, with a screaming, tyre-shredding extended car chase around Lisbon's tight, cobbled alleys a breathless and exhilarating highlight." <u>[27]</u> <u>Richard Roeper</u> of the <u>Chicago Sun-Times</u> gave it three out of four stars, writing, "*Heart of Stone* is clearly intended to jump-start an action franchise for Gadot, and it's off to a promising start."

#### Year-end lists

*Heart of Stone* appeared on the following "Worst Films of 2023" lists:

- 5th, Owen Gleiberman, (Variety).[29]
- 9th, Donald Clarke and Tara Brady, (The Irish Times). [30]
- 6th, Matt Singer (Screen Crush).[31]
- 8th, Marlow Stern (Rolling Stone)[32]
- Chris Evangelista, (/Film).[33]
- Dominic Griffin, (Baltimore Beat).[34]
- Meghan Cook, (Insider).[35]

#### Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
People's Choice Awards	February 18, 2024	The Drama Movie Star	Gal Gadot	Nominated	[36]
Jupiter Awards	2024	Best International Actress	<u>Gai Gauot</u>	Nominated	[37]

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### **External links**

- Heart of Stone (https://www.netflix.com/title/81416533) on Netflix
- Heart of Stone (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13603966/) at IMDb

