

Dune is ambitious and ambiguous — and in need of a decent ending.

Warner Bros.

The main thing you need to know about the ending of the new movie Dune is this: There isn't one. The 2021 adaptation of the classic Frank Herbert sci-fi novels is actually [Dune Part 1](#), so it gets halfway through Herbert's book and then it just... stops.

OK, so it's a bit more complicated than that. [CNET reviewer Richard Knightwell said Dune](#) is a "tour de force of cinematic sci-fi, a star-studded yet deeply weird fantasy epic," so here's a closer look at what happens in the climax of [Denis Villeneuve's](#) star-studded adaptation of Dune, and how it sets up a planned sequel. Spoilers heading your way like an angry sandworm exploding from the sand...

spoiler alert for type unknown

The film's been out in Europe and Asia for weeks since its premiere at the Venice Film festival, and now Dune Part 1 is in US theaters, as well as streaming on [HBO Max](#). In this epic, magisterial sci-fi saga, Duke Leto Atreides and his aristocratic family touch down on the sand-choked world of Arrakis only for previous occupants the Harkonnens to violently reclaim their all-important spice-mining operation. It's very nearly the end of the Atreides clan, but also a big step toward a larger destiny for Leto's sharp-cheekboned scion, Paul.

Soulfully played by Timothée Chalamet, Paul has been seeing visions of himself in the desert of Arrakis, meeting a mysterious stranger who looks a lot like Spider-Man and Euphoria star Zendaya. So as the film ends, Paul escapes into the desert with his witchily weird mother, Lady Jessica, and the film ends on a cliff-hanger ready for Dune Part 2. [Frank Herbert's original 1965 novel](#) splits fairly neatly(ish) into two sections, and though movie studio Warner Bros. hasn't confirmed a sequel yet, Villeneuve wants to pick up with the second half of the book later.

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Villeneuve's version isn't completely identical to the book: For example, he's cut the villainous Harkonnen character Feyd, memorably played by Sting in David Lynch's 1984 film version. Lynch's odd and much-derided film told the whole story of the book, but with less depth than this new 2021 version.

Lady Jessica and Paul (far left and far right) join forces with Chani and Stilgar at the climax of Dune Part 1.

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At the end of the 2021 film, Leto is left behind, and if you've ever wanted to see Oscar Isaac naked and stiff as a board then you're in luck. Leto is paralyzed thanks to the treachery of Paul's teacher Dr. Yueh, played by Chang Chen. Yueh's reward is to be murdered by the venal Baron Harkonnen, which means he doesn't live to see Leto take advantage of the poison gas capsule the traitor slipped into his teeth. Leto's dying breath finishes Harkonnen's advisor Piter De Vries, played by [The Suicide Squad's David Dastmalchian](#), but the fiendish Baron uses his shield and zooms to the ceiling. Bathing in viscous black oil, the Baron, played by Stellan Skarsgard, lives to plot his next move.

Meanwhile, among the Atrides casualties is Paul's friend and mentor, burly action man Duncan Idaho. Played by Aquaman star Jason Momoa, Duncan goes down fighting a squad of ferocious Sardaukar troops supplied by a duplicitous emperor — though it isn't entirely clear why Jessica couldn't use the voice against the attackers, or they couldn't just have closed the heavy doors and fled. Either way, Duncan clearly isn't showing up for the sequel, though Paul's other teacher Gurney Halleck isn't killed on-screen. If you've read the book you'll know that leaves the way clear for Josh Brolin to return in the proposed sequel.

As for Paul and Jessica, their narrow escape delivers them into the sandy hands of the Fremen, the desert people of Arrakis. Their leader, Stilgar, played by Javier Bardem, offers safety to the beleaguered pair, much to the dismay of his follower Jamis, played by Roots and [Star Trek: Strange New Worlds](#) star Babs Olusanmokin. Jamis doesn't believe the newcomers can survive the harsh conditions of the desert and burns with resentment against the outsiders, picking a fight to the death known in the book as the Tahaddi Challenge.

Zendaya is the girl of Timothée Chalamet's dreams in Dune.

Warner Bros

It's here that Paul sees his visions begin to come true. First he meets the girl of his dreams, Chani (Zendaya, finally). Then, just as in his dreams, she gives him a Crysknife, the ceremonial Fremen blade made from the tooth of a sandworm. Paul stands in as Jessica's champion and ultimately kills Jamis with the knife given him by Chani.

This is the first time Paul has killed anyone, though with the Harkonnens still around it's unlikely to be the last. The fight wins Paul and Jessica acceptance into Stilgar's hideaway, known as a sietch. That's where they're headed as the credits roll and Paul gazes into Chani's glowing blue eyes. Zendaya was only on set for four days, and if you're left wondering why she's barely in it, well, did I mention there's supposed to be a sequel?

Considering this is a story about galactic emperors and starships and space-witches scheming across time and space, the film seemed to be building to something more stirring than a knife fight in a cave. Ending the story with an intimate emotional moment is a clever subversion of the usual blockbuster space battle, so Villeneuve deserves credit for that. But when the film is so drastically open-ended, it would've been more satisfying to see at least some kind of resolution.

But if you've read the book, you'll know there are still plenty of big revelations to come. Is Paul really Muad'Dib, the Kwisatz Haderach, the cosmic messiah of Dune? What's the meaning of Paul's visions of himself with blue, glowing eyes? Will he return to his rain-swept home planet Caladan? Will he defeat Baron Harkonnen, and will he face the scheming galactic Emperor who set this death and destruction in motion?

Only time, and Dune Part 1's box office receipts, will tell. If Dune is a hit in theaters and on HBO Max, then Warner Bros. will hopefully give Villeneuve the go-ahead to shoot the sequel in the next year or so, and hopefully we'll get a proper ending.

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Source: [Dune ending explained, and how the movie sets up a spicy sequel – CNET](#)