

Virgin
COMICS

ISSUE 1
OF 4

BLADE OF THE WARRIOR:

Kshatriya



GAIND
MANIKANDAN

SEAS 08

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THE EARTH TREMBLES
BENEATH THEIR FEET.

LIKE AN INEXORABLE
TIDE, THEY COME.

AND AT THEIR HELM,
THEIR PROUD KING RIDES. A GOLDEN
MAN-GOD, MADE SEEMINGLY
FROM THE SUN ITSELF.

ALEXANDER,
CONQUEROR OF
THE WORLD!

THE RIVER
HYDASPES, 356 BC

WE
MUST TURN BACK,
ALEXANDER. THE MEN
ARE HOMESICK.

PTOLEMY, OLD
FRIEND, HOW CAN YOU
ASK ME TO TURN BACK NOW,
WHEN THE ADVENTURE HAS
ONLY JUST BEGUN?

ACROSS THE RIVER,
THE GREAT CONTINENT
OF INDUS AWAITS US.
AND AFTER THAT, WHO
KNOWS...?

ONWARD! WE MARCH
ONWARD, UNTIL WE REACH
THE VERY END OF THE
EARTH AND STARE DOWN
INTO THE ABYSS BEYOND.



AH, BUCEPHELAS, AT LEAST YOU ARE NOT AFRAID. LIKE ME, YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT IT IS TO FEAR.



TAKE CARE, ALEXANDER. THERE'S A **STORM** COMING.

PTOLEMY...



...YOU WORRY LIKE AN OLD WOMAN.



LOOK HOW **GREEN** THIS PLACE IS, BUCEPHELAS.

IN MACEDONIA, EVERYTHING WAS **GREY**. THE MOUNTAINS AND THE VALLEYS, EVEN THE **MEN**, HEWN FROM ROCK AND COLD SNOW.

BUT **HERE** A MAN COULD BELIEVE IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN WAR.



OLD PTOLEMY WAS RIGHT, A **STORM** GATHERS. WE'D BETTER RETURN TO CAMP.



WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?



YOU'VE LOST YOUR WAY, KING. I'VE COME TO HELP YOU FIND IT.

FOLLOW ME, THERE'S SHELTER NEARBY.



IT'S GOOD YOU FOUND ME WHEN YOU DID, OLD MAN.

DOES IT ALWAYS RAIN SO MUCH IN THIS GODFORSAKEN LAND?



IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT I FOUND YOU, KING. I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR A VERY LONG TIME.



HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

IT WAS FATED THAT WE WOULD MEET. SUCH IS THE GRAND DESIGN OF DESTINY.



I AM MACEDONIAN, FRIEND. I BELIEVE IN NO DESTINY EXCEPT THAT WHICH I MAKE FOR MYSELF...

...THE DESTINY OF MY SWORD AND THE GLORY I EARN IN BATTLE.



IS THAT WHY YOU HAVE COME TO INDIA? FOR GLORY?

INDEED. WHAT ELSE IS THERE FOR A WARRIOR SAVE GLORY?

WHAT OF HONOR? DUTY?

WORDS, FRIEND. PRETTY WORDS THAT HAVE NO PLACE IN THIS AGE OF BLOOD AND IRON.



COME, THEN...



...THERE IS SOMETHING YOU MUST SEE.



YOU CALL YOURSELF A WARRIOR, KING, BUT I SHALL SHOW YOU A TRUE WARRIOR, A MAN SO VALIANT THAT HIS NAME IS REVERED EVEN TODAY, A THOUSAND YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH.



WHO WAS HE?



HIS NAME WAS *KSHATRIYA*, AND AN EON AGO HE WAS THE GREATEST WARRIOR THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN.



"BEFORE THE AGE
OF GODS ENDED,
AND THE AGE OF
EPICS BEGAN..."

"...BEFORE THE MAHABHARATA
HAD TURNED THE FIELDS OF
KURUK RED WITH BLOOD, AND
RAMA HAD ROUTED THE
DEMON ARMIES OF LANKA..."

"...THERE WAS
A GOLDEN AGE."



"A TIME OF MYTH AND LEGEND, WHEN
MAGIC STILL EXISTED, AND THE
FABLED KINGDOMS OF THE SATYUGA
HAD NOT YET FALLEN BEFORE THE
RELENTLESS ONSLAUGHT OF TIME."

"AND THERE WAS NO
KINGDOM MORE FABLED
THAN AKASHA."

"SPLENDID, GLORIOUS
AKASHA, WHOSE RULERS
TRACED THEIR LINEAGE BACK
TO MANU HIMSELF, THE
VERY FIRST MAN."

"THE MONARCH OF THIS MOST LEGENDARY OF KINGDOM WAS AMITABHA.

"GENTLE, WISE AMITABHA, UNDER WHOSE REIGN AKASHA HAD STOOD PROUD FOR FIFTY LONG YEARS, A BEACON OF TRUTH AND LIBERTY AND JUSTICE."

MY *SONS*, MY BEAUTIFUL *SONS*. IT *DELIGHTS* MY EYES TO LOOK UPON YOU.



MAYADEVA, THE ELDER, SO INTELLIGENT, SO EAGER TO RULE.

AND *KSHATRIYA*, THE YOUNGER, SO VALIANT, SO FULL OF LIFE.

THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO NAME AN HEIR.

IT MUST BE *ME*, FATHER. IT IS MY *BIRTHRIGHT*, FOR I AM ELDEST.

WHAT OF YOU, *KSHATRIYA*? DO YOU NOT COVET THE THRONE?

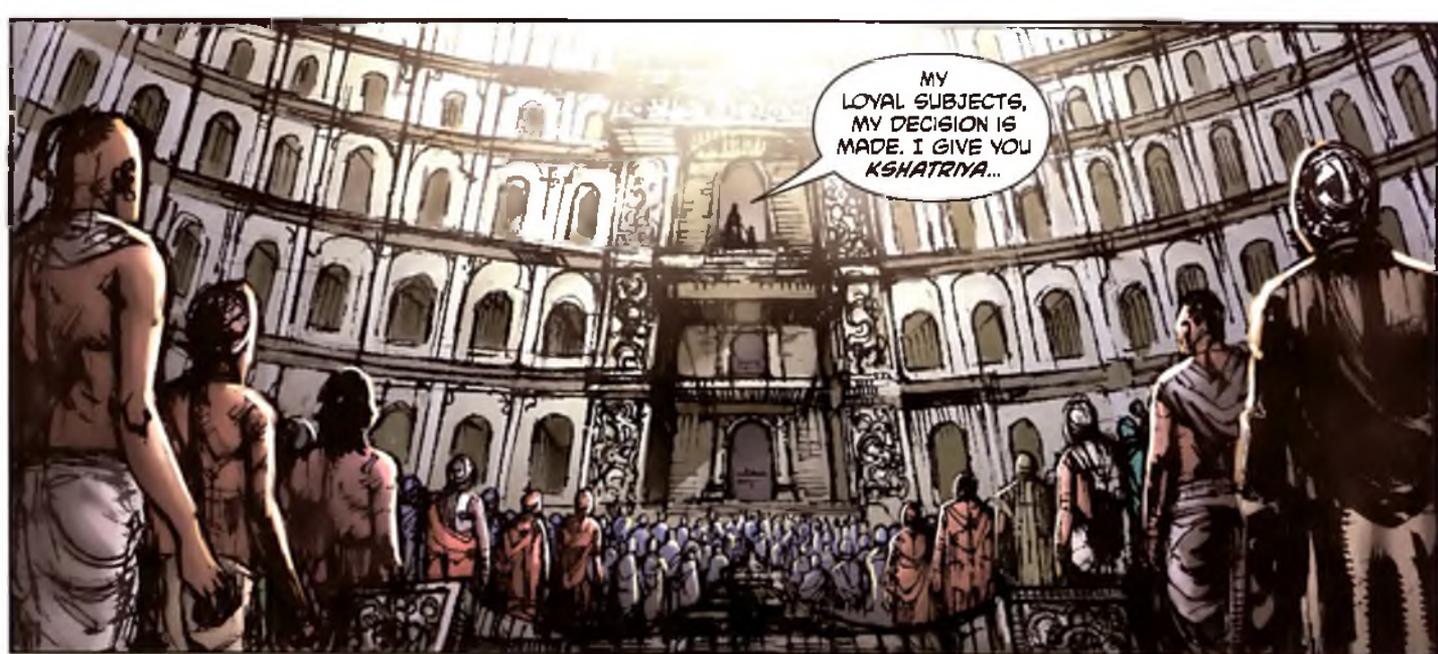
IF YOU WISH IT, FATHER, I WOULD TRY TO BE THE BEST KING IN THE WHOLE WORLD.

A DIFFICULT CHOICE. *LEAVE ME* NOW, I MUST MEDITATE A WHILE LONGER BEFORE I MAKE MY DECISION.

ENOUGH, BOY. DO AS YOU ARE TOLD. YOU ARE NOT YET KING. *REMEMBER THAT*.

BUT FATHER...

ONE DAY, OLD MAN, MY TIME WILL COME.



MY LOYAL SUBJECTS, MY DECISION IS MADE. I GIVE YOU KSHATRIYA...



...YOUR FUTURE KING.



YOU WILL NOT CHEAT ME OF MY BIRTHRIGHT, FATHER.



SOMEHOW, I WILL FIND A WAY TO STOP YOU.



WELL, MORTAL, ARE YOU JUST GOING TO SIT THERE AND CRY LIKE A BABY? OR ARE YOU GOING TO SEIZE WHAT IS YOURS?



WHAT MANNER OF SORCERY IS THIS?

WHO... WHAT ARE YOU?

I AM SHAITAN, GNAT. AND I COME TO OFFER YOU A GIFT.



I CAN GIVE YOU POWER.

THE POWER TO BECOME KING.



WHY ME?



BECAUSE I SENSE INSIDE YOU A DARKNESS, ACHING TO BE UNLEASHED.

TAKE MY GIFT, AND TOGETHER WE WILL RULE, NOT JUST AKASHA, BUT THE WORLD.

ALL I ASK IN RETURN IS AN OATH. TELL ME, WILL YOU BOW DOWN AND SWEAR FEALTY TO ME?



YES.
YES, I WILL.



THEN GIVE ME YOUR HAND, AND I SHALL GRANT YOU EVERYTHING YOUR HEART DESIRES.



I GIVE YOU
THE POWER TO
CONTROL THE
HEARTS OF
MEN.

GHH...



...AAAAGH!

THE POWER TO
ENSLAVE THEIR
SOULS.



THE POWER
TO *GIVE SHAPE*
TO THEIR EVERY SIN, AND TO
SUBVERT THEM TO
EVIL.



RISE, MAYADEVA,
AND TAKE WHAT IS YOURS.
NOW, TRULY, YOU ARE *LORD*
OF MAYA, THE MASTER
OF ILLUSION.



AT LAST...



...*NOTHING*
SHALL STAND IN
MY WAY.

TEMPLE OF THE SUN



SKANDA,
GOD OF WAR
AND PATRON OF MY
TRIBE, I BESEECH
YOU...
...BLESS MY
YOUNGEST SON
AND GIVE HIM THE
STRENGTH TO BE A
GOOD KING.



REMEMBER,
MY SON, WE OF THE
SURYAVANSHI, WE FIGHT FOR
THOSE WHO ARE TOO WEAK
TO FIGHT. WE SPEAK FOR
THOSE WHO HAVE
NO VOICE.



THAT IS OUR DUTY,
TO BLAZE BLINDLY LIKE
THE SUN, AND TO LEAD SO
THAT OTHERS CAN
FOLLOW.

REMEMBER THAT,
KSHATRIYA. NO MATTER
WHAT MAY HAPPEN, NEVER
FORGET WHO YOU
ARE.



MARK HIM, PRIEST,
WITH THE ROYAL CARTOUCHE,
SO THAT NO MAN CAN DENY
HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE.



TELL ME, ORACLE,
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE
PORTEND FOR MY
SON?



I AM BLIND,
BUT I CAN SEE, NO
DESTINY CAN HIDE
FROM ME.

THIS CHILD,
HIS DESTINY IS PAIN,
SORROW, FOREVER
HIS BANE.

AGAINST EVIL
HE WILL STAND, WHEN
WEAKER SOULS
DISBAND.



LONE SHALL
HE FIGHT SHADOW'S
PALL, SOLE OBSTACLE
TO SHAITAN'S
THRALL.



THE
HERO WHO
REFUSES TO YIELD, THE
ONE-ARMED BEAST
REVEALED.



SUCH A FATE
I GCRY FOR YOUR SON,
BUT YOU, O KING, YOU ARE
LNDONE, FOR DEATH'S COLD
SHADOW, IT DRAWS NEAR,
AND THUS BEGINS THE
AGE OF FEAR.



MAJESTY, WE
ARE BETRAYED.

WE ARE
ATTACKED!



I'M BRAVE,
FATHER, I CAN
FIGHT.



NO,
KSHATRIVA,
YOU ARE ONLY
A CHILD.

TAKE HIM
SOMEWHERE
SAFE.



RAKSHASA!

HOW DID
THEY GET INSIDE
THE CITADEL?

FORGIVE
ME, SIRE. THEY
TOOK US BY
SURPRISE.



FOLLOW ME, MY
BROTHERS, AND WE SHALL
SEND THESE DEMONSPAWN
BACK TO THE HELL FROM
WHENCE THEY CAME.



FOR
AKASHA AND
THE GLORY OF
SKANDA!

FORWARD!



WE ARE TOO FEW!



STOP!
THAT ONE IS MINE.



FOUL WRETCH,
ARE YOU THE MASTER
OF THESE BEASTS?
FACE ME,
IF YOU DARE.



AAGH!



WHO ARE YOU?





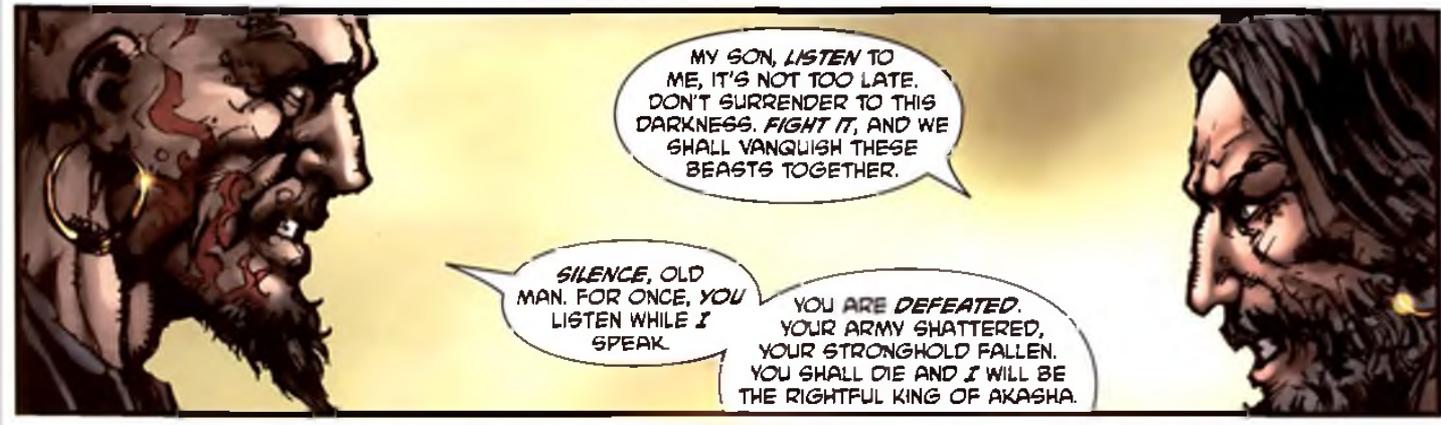
I AM THE NEW KING.



MAYADEVA... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?



SOMETHING I SHOULD HAVE DONE A LONG TIME AGO... FATHER.



MY SON, LISTEN TO ME, IT'S NOT TOO LATE. DON'T SURRENDER TO THIS DARKNESS. FIGHT IT, AND WE SHALL VANQUISH THESE BEASTS TOGETHER.

SILENCE, OLD MAN. FOR ONCE, YOU LISTEN WHILE I SPEAK.

YOU ARE DEFEATED. YOUR ARMY SHATTERED, YOUR STRONGHOLD FALLEN. YOU SHALL DIE AND I WILL BE THE RIGHTFUL KING OF AKASHA.



TAKE MY LIFE IF YOU WILL, BUT GRANT ME A DYING REQUEST. I BEG YOU...

...SPARE YOUR BROTHER.

VERY WELL.

I WON'T KILL HIM...



...BUT I CANNOT SAY THE SAME FOR YOU, FATHER.

NOBLE SKANDA, HEAR MY PLEA! PROTECT KSHATRIYA!



BRING MY BROTHER NEAR, SO THAT I MAY LOOK UPON HIM.



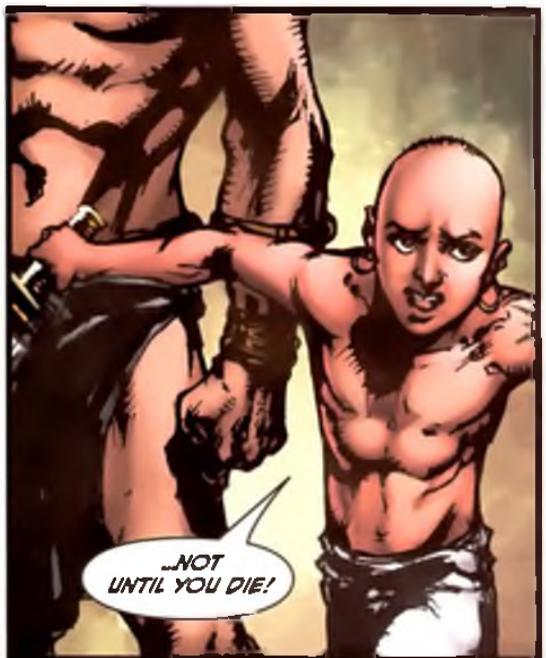
WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO US, BROTHER?!

OUR FATHER WAS A WEAK FOOL. HE HAD TO DIE, SO THAT I COULD FULFILL MY DESTINY AND BECOME KING.

BUT YOU, I PROMISED HIM THAT YOU WOULD LIVE. SO I TELL YOU NOW, *KNEEL* BEFORE ME AND I WILL SPARE YOUR LIFE.



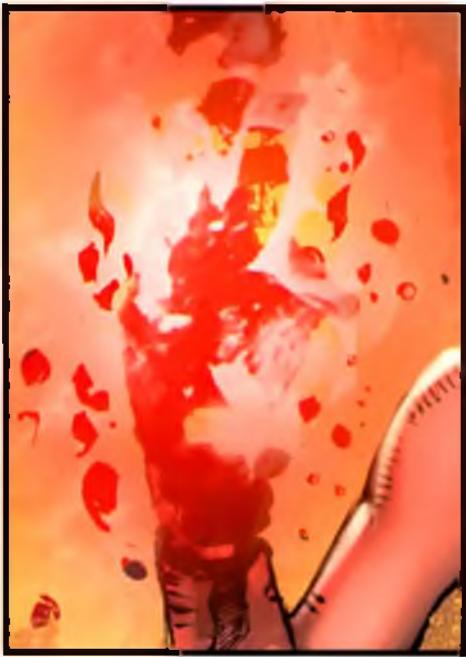
I WILL NEVER BOW DOWN TO YOU, MURDERER. I WILL NEVER REST...



...NOT UNTIL YOU DIE!



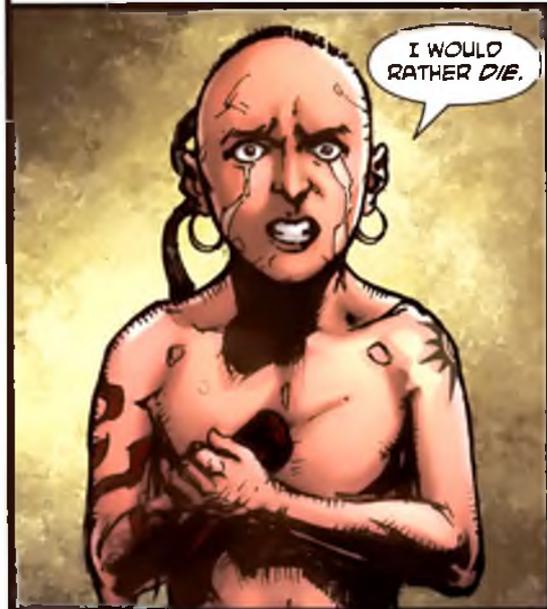
AAAAHH!





SPARE ME THE THEATRICS, LITTLE BROTHER, OR YOU WILL LOSE MORE THAN YOUR ARM.

SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO ME NOW, AND I WILL LET YOU LIVE AS MY SLAVE.



I WOULD RATHER DIE.



AS YOU WISH.



NO...



I TOLD YOU I WOULD NOT KILL HIM, FATHER.

BUT I NEVER PROMISED HE WOULD NOT DIE.







AH, MY BELOVED, YOU HAVE FOUND HIM FOR ME.



HE'S LOST TOO MUCH BLOOD. HE'LL DIE SOON UNLESS SOMETHING IS DONE.



CAN I ASK A SACRIFICE OF YOU, MY BEAUTY? WILL YOU GIVE A LITTLE OF YOUR LIFE SO THAT HE MAY LIVE?



FROM TIGER'S BLOOD, AND TIGER'S BREATH...

...JOIN WHAT WAS SUNDERED AND SPARE THIS BOY FROM DEATH.



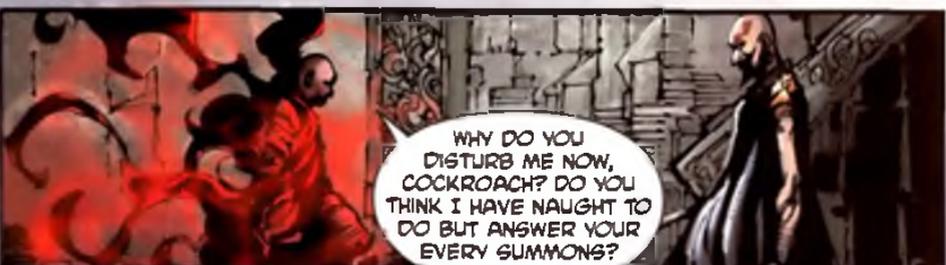
LET MAN AND BEAST BE JOINED TOGETHER AS ONE, LET THEIR FLESH BE UNITED, AND NEVER UNDONE.



YOU WILL LIVE, CHILD, BUT ONLY TIME WILL TELL IF WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU IS A BLESSING OR A CURSE.



SHAITAN, HEAR
MY PLEA, AND COME
TO ME.



WHY DO YOU
DISTURB ME NOW,
COCKROACH? DO YOU
THINK I HAVE NAUGHT TO
DO BUT ANSWER YOUR
EVERY SUMMONS?



I WANTED
YOU TO SEE WHAT I HAVE
WROUGHT WITH THE POWER
YOU GRANTED ME.

I AM KING NOW,
UNDISPUTED OVERLORD OF
THE NORTH, AND NONE CAN
STAND IN MY WAY TO
CHALLENGE ME.

DO NOT BE
SO SURE, MORTAL.

THERE IS ONE WHO
STILL LIVES. HE WILL BE THE
DEVICE OF YOUR DESTRUCTION,
AND WILL *OPPOSE* YOU UNTIL
HIS DYING DAY.



WHO IS IT? OF
WHOM DO YOU
SPEAK?

THE BOY,
YOUR BROTHER.

IMPOSSIBLE.
HE IS DEAD, I
SAW TO IT.

NOT AT ALL,
WORM. HE STILL LIVES,
AND I FORESEE HE WILL
SOMEDAY RISE TO
FOIL OUR PLANS.



HE WILL *NOT*.
I PROMISE YOU
THAT.



LORD SKANDA, WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ME NOW?

THAT IS FOR YOU TO DECIDE, MY BOY.



WE ARE AT A POINT OF CRISIS, KSHATRIYA. THE BATTLE OF THE AGES HAS BEGUN.

YOUR BROTHER, HE IS BUT THE FIRST TO BE CORRUPTED BY THE MALEVOLENCE OF SHAITAN.

EVEN NOW, THE FORCES OF DARKNESS GATHER STRENGTH, AND THREATEN TO ENGULF THE WORLD, UNLESS A HERO DARES TO OPPOSE THEM.



YOU HAVE TWO CHOICES, KSHATRIYA. YOU CAN *HIDE*, PRAYING THAT THE DARKNESS WILL NEVER FIND YOU. OR YOU CAN *STAND* AGAINST SHAITAN, AND WIN BACK WHAT YOU HAVE LOST.

HOW?

I WILL HELP YOU. I WILL TEACH YOU THE ART OF *WAR*, AND TRAIN YOUR BODY AND MIND.

BUT I WILL NOT FORCE YOU TO STAY IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO, KSHATRIYA. THAT IS A CHOICE YOU MUST MAKE FOR YOURSELF. *FIGHT OR FLEE.*



I AM A SURYAVANSHI.

I CHOOSE TO FIGHT.



SO BE IT.

COME ALONG. WE HAVE A GREAT DISTANCE TO TRAVEL, AND VERY LITTLE TIME.



AH, YOU HAVE COME...



...MY THREE FINEST AGGASSING.

...THE APE...

...THE SNAKE...

...AND THE MAMMOTH.



FIND THIS BOY AND KILL HIM.

I CARE NOT HOW LONG IT TAKES YOU. DO NOT RETURN WITHOUT HIS HEAD.



WE LIVE TO OBEY.



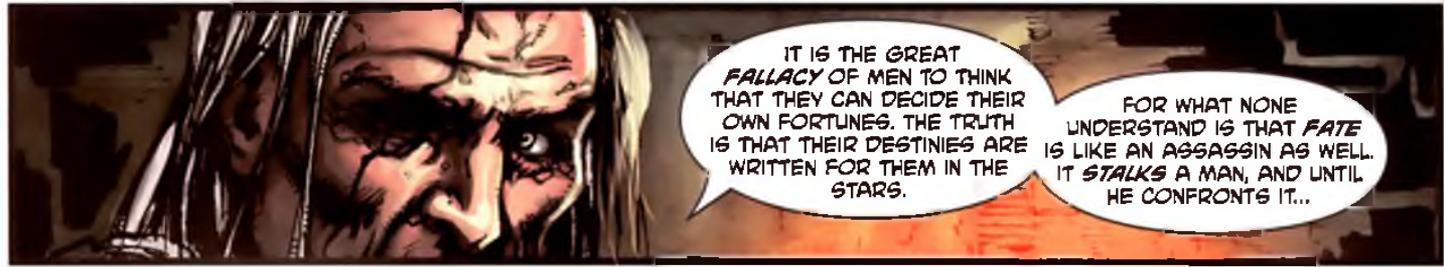
THIS TIME, BROTHER, YOU WILL NOT ESCAPE ME. THIS TIME, I PROMISE YOU, YOU WILL DIE.



WHAT HAPPENED TO KSHATRIYA? DID THE ASSASSINS FIND HIM?

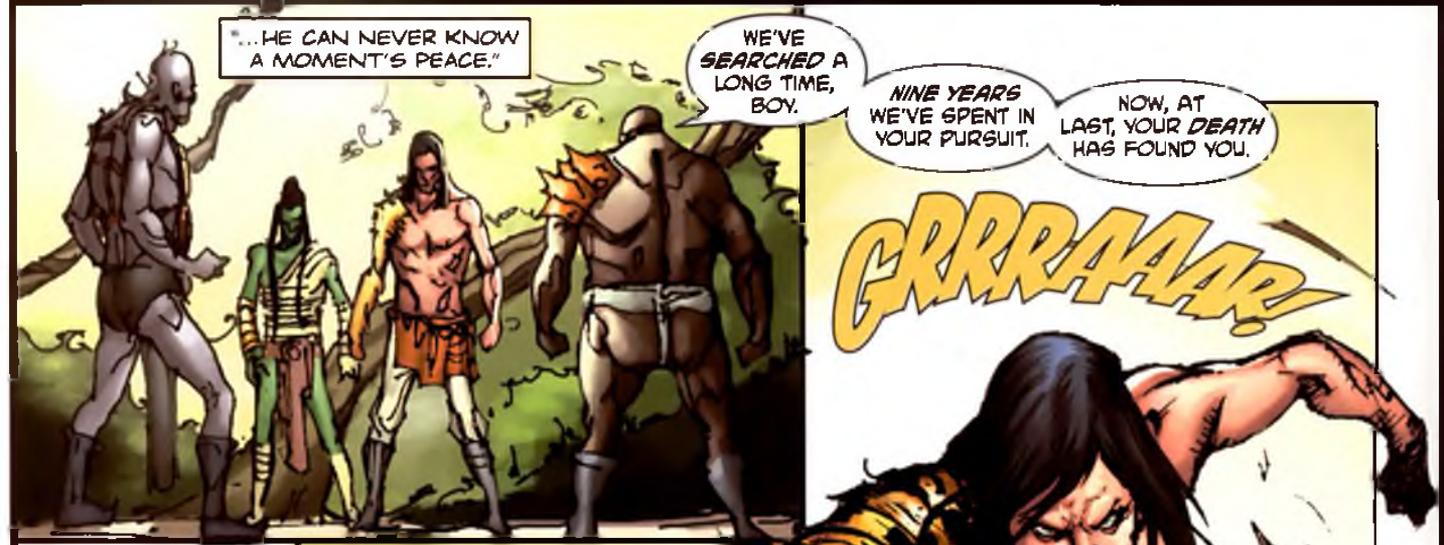
PATIENCE, KING...PATIENCE. JUST AS THE WILD MUSTANG MUST BE TAMED SLOWLY, SO A STORY CANNOT BE HURRIED.

DO NOT TOY WITH ME, OLD MAN. TELL ME NOW, WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?



IT IS THE GREAT FALLACY OF MEN TO THINK THAT THEY CAN DECIDE THEIR OWN FORTUNES. THE TRUTH IS THAT THEIR DESTINIES ARE WRITTEN FOR THEM IN THE STARS.

FOR WHAT NONE UNDERSTAND IS THAT FATE IS LIKE AN ASSASSIN AS WELL. IT STALKS A MAN, AND UNTIL HE CONFRONTS IT...



...HE CAN NEVER KNOW A MOMENT'S PEACE."

WE'VE SEARCHED A LONG TIME, BOY.

NINE YEARS WE'VE SPENT IN YOUR PURSUIT.

NOW, AT LAST, YOUR DEATH HAS FOUND YOU.

GRRRAAR!



TO BE CONTINUED!

"EXOTIC EASTERN LOCALES AND
EPIC STORYTELLING IN THE TRADITION
OF HEROES LIKE CONAN."

—BON MARZ



An exiled prince, whose kingdom was stolen by his demonic brother, returns for revenge in this epic sword and sorcery tale of bravery, retribution and family war set in a mysterious eastern kingdom. Torn between vengeance and honor, forced to survive with only his wits and a mystic black blade he wields more fiercely than any man, Kshatriya's (*shut REE yuh*) path is paved with blood on his journey to becoming the greatest warrior the world has ever known.



THE DUKE BOYS

MINUTEMEN

