



ISSUE 5

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S

DEVI

TM

AAGAMAN

BASU / SINGH



Created by
Shekhar Kapur

Script - Samit Basu

Art - Mukesh Singh

Color - Nanjan J & Mukesh Singh

Letters - Ravikiran B.S. & Nilesh S. Mahadik

Cover Art - Aditya Chari & Suresh Seetharaman

Assistant Editor - Mahesh Kamath

Editor - MacKenzie Cadenhead

Special Thanks

SIDDHARTH KOTIAN, Series Co-Conspirator

VIRGIN COMICS

Chief Executive Officer and Publisher

SHARAD DEVARAJAN

Chief Creative Officer and Editor-in-Chief

GOTHAM CHOPRA

President & Studio Chief

SURESH SEETHARAMAN

Chief Marketing Officer

LARRY LIEBERMAN

SRVP - Studio

JEEVAN KANG

VP Operations

SAMARJIT CHOUDHRY

Director of Development

MACKENZIE CADENHEAD

Chief Visionaries

DEEPAK CHOPRA, SHEKHAR KAPUR,

SIR RICHARD BRANSON

Special Thanks to:

Mark Frangos, Frances Farrow, Dan Porter,

Christopher Linen, Peter Feldman,

Raju Puthukaral and Mallika Chopra

DEVI Issue Number 5, November 2006 published by VIRGIN COMICS L.L.C.
OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 594 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Copyright
©2006, Virgin Comics L.L.C. All Rights Reserved. The characters included in
this issue, DEVI, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are properties of Virgin
Comics L.L.C. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons,
and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or
institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely
coincidental. Printed in Canada.

For advertising, licensing and sales info please contact:
Info@virgincomics.com or (212) 564-4040. www.virgincomics.com



IT WAS THE SECOND CENTURY of mankind's arrival on earth when the Gods of Light took up arms against one of their own. Bala, a fallen God, had rejected the old ways of the Pantheon and sought to impose his dominion over man.

Feeding off the forced worship of men, Bala had grown too powerful for the pantheon. So the pure Gods each sacrificed a part of themselves to create a powerful entity.

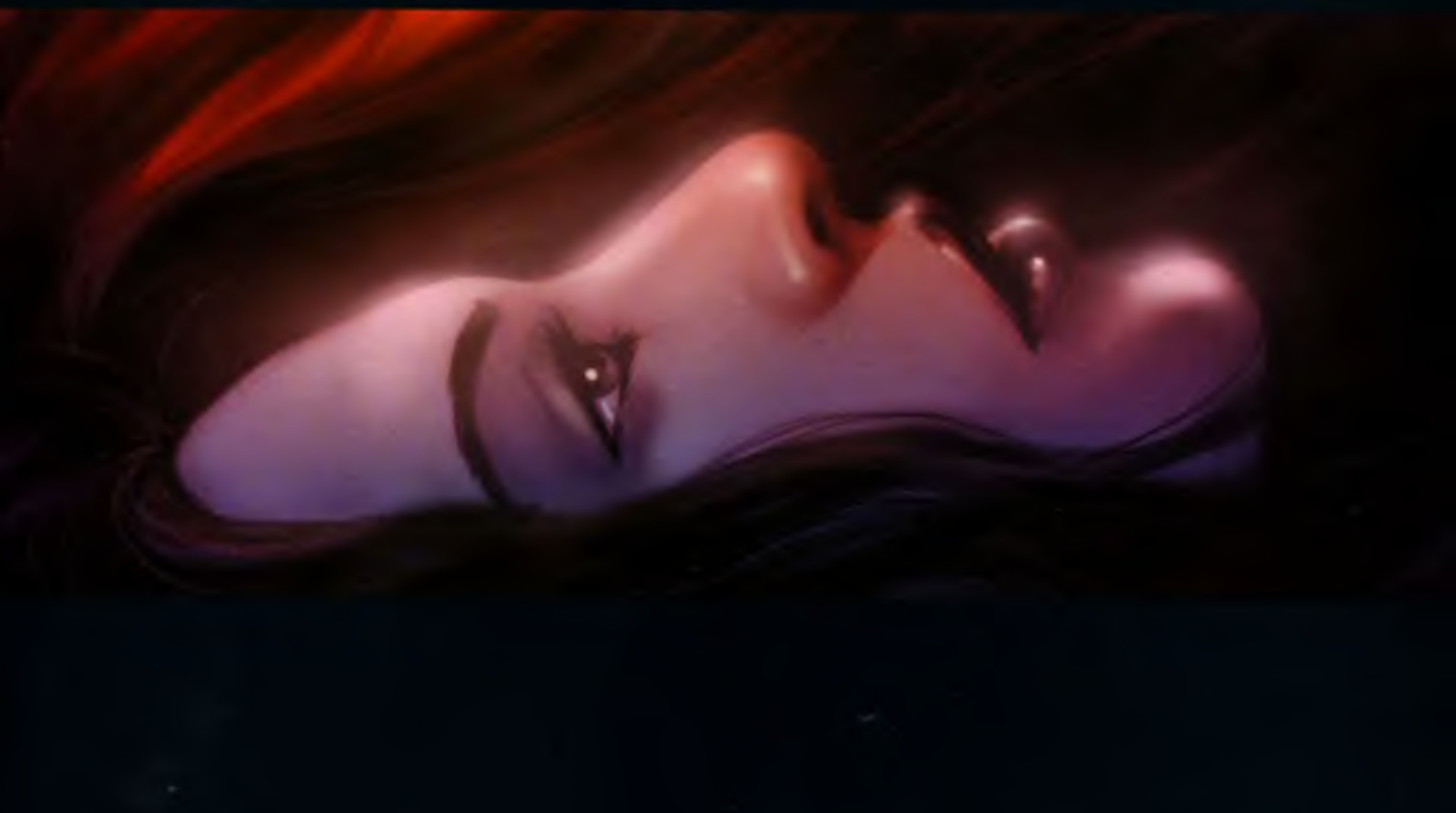
She is Devi.

Story so far.


TARA MEHTA, THE CHOSEN DEVI INCARNATE, IS IN A LOT OF TROUBLE.

HER MORTAL BODY LIES IN THE BACK SEAT OF A CAR, HURTLING TOWARDS THE OLD TEMPLE WHERE THE DURAPASYA COUNCIL AWAIT, READY TO SACRIFICE TARA TO THE GODS AND USHER IN THE DEVI SPIRIT--AND THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO WANT HER DEAD. KRATHA, THE APSARA ASSASSIN, AND IYAM, LORD BALA'S RIGHT HAND MAN, ARE STREAKING TOWARDS THE TEMPLE TOO, AS IS HER ONLY ALLY, INSPECTOR RAHUL SINGH--WHO, ALONG WITH THE DISGRACED DURAPASYA AGANTUK, APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY ONE INTERESTED IN KEEPING HER ALIVE.


BUT TARA'S SEEING THINGS NOW THAT MAKE ALL THESE CONCERNS SEEM TRIVIAL--BECAUSE, IN HER SOMA-INDUCED TRANCE, SHE'S BEEN TAKEN TO BE BLESSED BY THE GODS, AND TO JOURNEY EVEN FURTHER TOWARDS HER DESTINY--DIVINITY.



Part Five
AAGAMAN




SO, AT 9:15 PM I CALLED UP THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, SITAPUR POLICE, AND ASKED FOR BACKUP. I'M GOING TO STOP A HUMAN SACRIFICE AT THIS OLD TEMPLE, I SAID.




AT 9:16 PM, THE ACP TOLD ME HE'D FIRE ME IF I EVER CALLED HIM AGAIN. HE TOLD ME TO STOP DRINKING, AND STOP IMAGINING SUPERNATURAL BEASTIES IF I WANTED TO KEEP MY JOB.

AT 9:20 PM, HE FINISHED TELLING ME WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT MY METHODS, MY MANNERS AND MY MOTHER, AND HUNG UP ON ME.




THAT'S WHEN I STARTED THINKING: WHAT IF I WAS MAKING A HUGE MISTAKE? WHAT IF THIS WAS A TRAP, OR A HOAX? I HAD NO HARD EVIDENCE LEADING ME HERE; JUST A LIAR'S PROMISE. AND WORSE, IF SHE'D BEEN TELLING THE TRUTH, I'D BE A HUGE FOOL TO BARGE IN ON THIS CULT THING WITHOUT BACKUP.



CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I COULD DO.






AT EASE, WE MEET ONCE AGAIN,
SOLDIER. AS ALWAYS, I WILL BE BRIEF.
YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR MISSION;
NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT MARS SENT
HIS FINEST WARRIOR OUT IN THE
FIELD EMPTY-HANDED.

I GIVE YOU, WAR-GOD TO
WAR-GODDESS, SKILL WITH EVERY WEAPON
EVER DREAMED UP BY MORTAL OR GOD;
THE STRENGTH OF THE MYRMIDONS UNITED,
UNPARALLELED KNOWLEDGE OF STRATEGY
IN BATTLE, AND A TRUE SOLDIER'S FORTUNE;
YOU WILL ALWAYS APPEAR, IN BATTLE,
WHEN YOU ARE MOST NEEDED.

THAT IS ALL,
SOLDIER. NOW GO,
MAKE ME PROUD.



LOVE IS A KING'S SPLENDOROUS THING, FABULOUS
AND FICKLE,
SOMETIMES SIGHS AND STARRY NIGHTS, SOMETIMES
SLAP AND TICKLE.

KAMA COMES TO YOU NOW, LOVE, WITH LOVE'S OWN
CRUEL CARESSES,
TO BLEND YOUR SMILE, YOUR BEAUTY BRIGHT, YOUR
EYES, YOUR SILKEN TRESSES.

ARMOUR I HAVE FOR YOU, FINER THAN FIERCEST
WAR-SMITH'S ART,
FOR THIS IS LOVE'S BANE, MAIL THAT FOILS E EN MY
OWN SWIFT LOVE-PART.

NO MORE WILL YOU BE VICTIM TO LOVE, LUST,
PASSION, DESIRE,
YET EVERY MAN THAT SEES YOU WILL FIND HIS
HEART SET AFIRE.
YOU ARE DREAM-WOMAN OF THE GODS, IDEAL,
PERFECT, DISTILLED
DESTINED TO BE WANTED EVEN BY THOSE WHOM
YOU MUST KILL.



ENTER, BRAVE DURAPASYA! HALLOWED IS THE HOUR OF YOUR ARRIVAL. ALL IS WELL. SOON THIS BLESSED MORTAL WILL BE LIBERATED, THAT THE DEVI MAY LIVE.



LAY HER DOWN ON THE SLAB. BRING ME THE SCIMITAR OF DELIVERANCE. WE SHOULD BEGIN AT ONCE.



SWAMIJI...

AGANTUK, IF THIS CEREMONY UNSETTLES YOU, YOU MAY LEAVE.



IS EVERYTHING IN PLACE?

YES, SWAMIJI.

GOOD. THEN WE MAY BEGIN.



I SING THE PRAISES OF BODHA THE CREATOR, MOST HOLY, MOST POWERFUL, LORD OF THE PANTHEON, CHAMPION OF THE HEAVENS, MONARCH OF THE SKIES, THE CLOUDS AND THE RAIN. DEFENDER OF--



I WANT EVERYONE'S HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM.

WHO DARES--

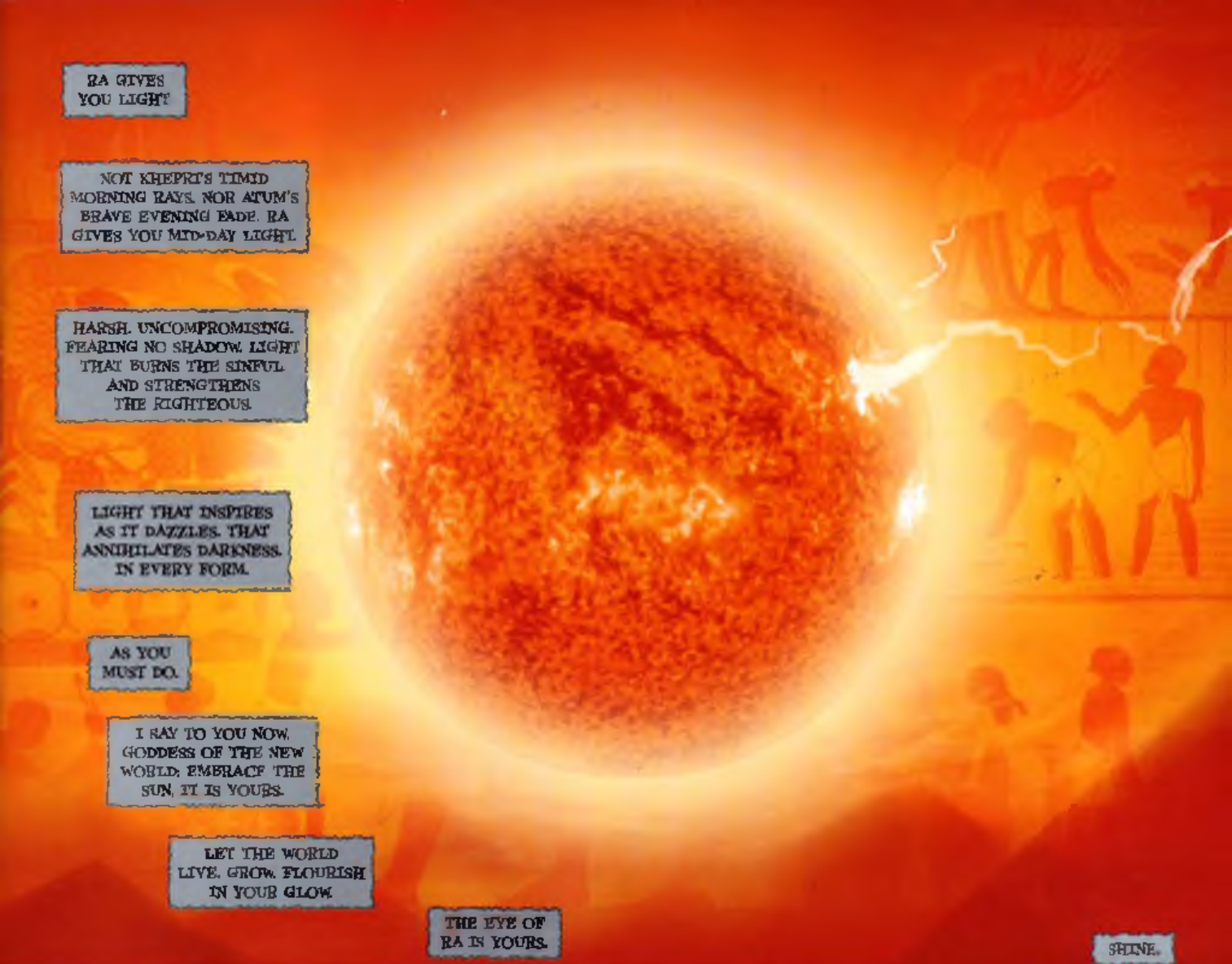


IT IS I, O HOLY SUPER FREAK. THE GREAT GOD OF YOU'RE ALL UNDER ARREST.



HAHAHAHA

HAHAHAHA



RA GIVES
YOU LIGHT.

NOT KHEPRT'S TIMID
MORNING RAYS, NOR ATUM'S
BRAVE EVENING EADE. RA
GIVES YOU MID-DAY LIGHT.

HARSH, UNCOMPROMISING,
FEARING NO SHADOW, LIGHT
THAT BURNS THE SINFUL
AND STRENGTHENS
THE RIGHTEOUS.

LIGHT THAT INSPIRES
AS IT DAZZLES, THAT
ANNIHILATES DARKNESS
IN EVERY FORM.


AS YOU
MUST DO.

I RAY TO YOU NOW,
GODDESS OF THE NEW
WORLD; EMBRACE THE
SUN, IT IS YOURS.

LET THE WORLD
LIVE, GROW, FLOURISH
IN YOUR GLOW.

THE EYE OF
RA IS YOURS.

SHINE.



HELLO, MY DEAR. MY NAME IS
KAPITAL, AND I AM WHAT YOU
MIGHT CALL A WEALTH GOD.
THE WEALTH GOD, IN FACT.

I'M SURE ALL THE RHETORIC
AND BROMSTONE YOU'VE BEEN
GETTING FROM THE REST OF
THE OLIGARCHY MUST BE
VERY EXCITING, BUT LET'S
NOT FORGET THAT YOUR
PROJECT IS, FUNDAMENTALLY,
A RESOURCE OPTIMIZATION
PROBLEM LIKE ANY OTHER.
AS AN EFFECTIVE BENEFACTOR,
I MUST MAKE SURE THAT
YOUR INITIAL ENDOWMENTS,
AT LEAST, ARE ABUNDANT.

LET US SEE, YOU, DEVI, WILL
FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ARRIVE AT THE
CONSTRAINING BOUNDARIES OF YOUR
RESOURCE SET; LABOUR AND CAPITAL
WILL BE YOURS IN PLENTY, EVEN WHEN
CONDITIONS ARE ADVERSE.

ONWARD, DEAR, WITH
MY BLESSINGS. BLISS
POINT BE YOURS.



HE CAN'T BE A POLICEMAN. MUST BE A LUNATIC.

HOW DID YOU EVEN GET PAST OUR SENTRIES?

WHAT SENTRIES?

FREAK



200

THESE SENTRIES.

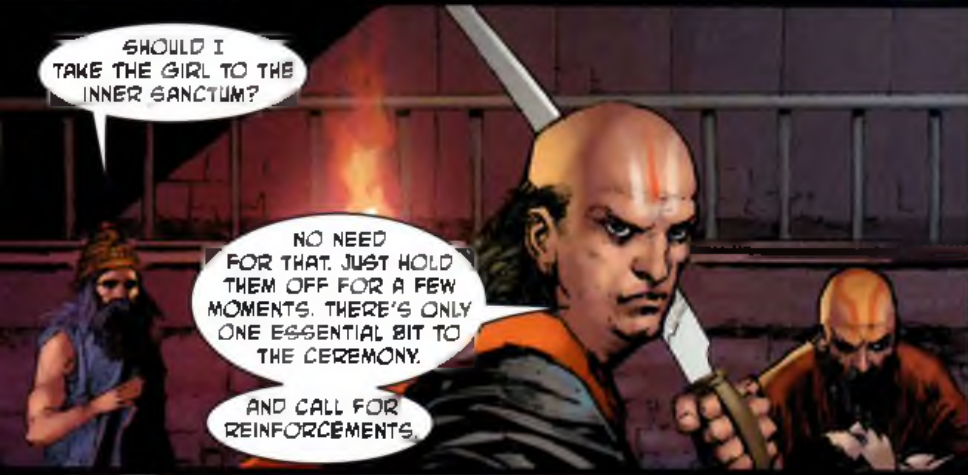


THE GIRL IS MINE.

LET'S JUST BOTH KILL EVERYONE, ALL RIGHT, IVAM? IT'S SIMPLER.



TO ARMS!



SHOULD I TAKE THE GIRL TO THE INNER SANCTUM?

NO NEED FOR THAT. JUST HOLD THEM OFF FOR A FEW MOMENTS. THERE'S ONLY ONE ESSENTIAL BIT TO THE CEREMONY.

AND CALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS.

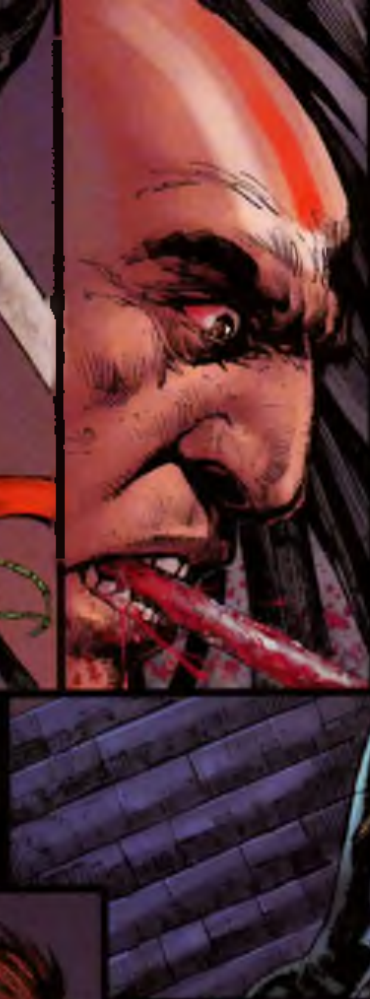


HANDS OFF, AGANTUK.

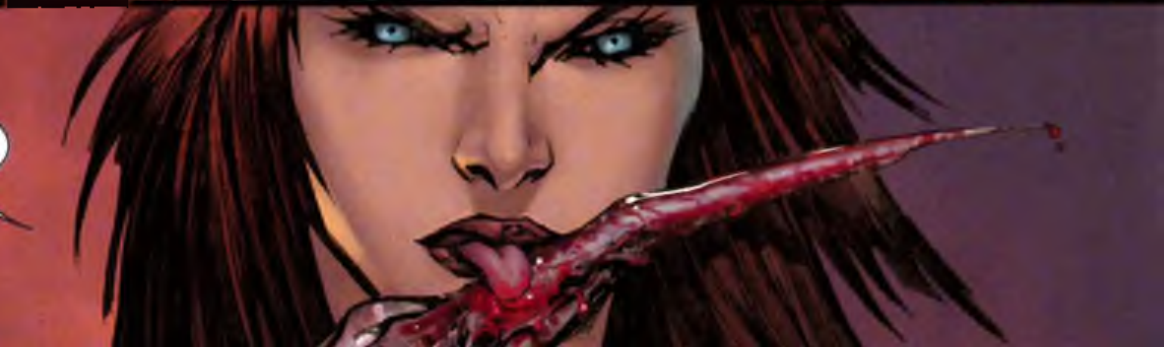



FAREWELL, TARA. THE DEVI MUST AWAKEN, AND TIME IS PRESSING.

I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT THIS CEREMONY SHORT.



WE'VE GOT TO STOP MEETING LIKE THIS.





YOUR NAME USED TO BE TARA,
RIGHT? PERFECT, BABY,
AM I GOING TO MAKE YOU A
STAR. MY NAME IS INTERFACE--
MESSENGER OF THE GODS AND ALL
THAT, BUT WHAT I REALLY DO
IS COMMUNICATIONS.

I'M THE SULTAN OF STYLE AND
SOUNDBITES, THE BADSHAH OF
BROADBAND AND BLAB, THE
IMPRESARIO OF IMAGE-BUILDING
AND INTERNETS, THE MESSIAH OF
MEDIA AND MESSAGING. I'M THE
HOOPIEST FROOD THERE IS, BABY,
AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT.

BUT ENOUGH ABOUT ME--WHAT
I'M HERE TO DO IS TO BLESS
YOU, SO LET'S GET WITH THE
PROGRAM--WORK, WCRK, HUH?
ANYWAY, THANKS TO ME, ON THE
WAY TO BLITZING THE BIG BAD
BAT, YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK,
SOUND AND SMELL SO GOOD THEY
WOON'T KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM.

PERFECT PR, KILLER CHARISMA,
TERRIFIC TAPS AND THE
COOLEST CATCHPHRASES--
THAT'S YOU. THAT'S ME.
THAT'S TEAMWORK, DEVI
BABY, GREASED LIGHTNING.

GOTTA ROLL, NOW.
KISSES, SWEETHEART
--AND SAY HELLO TO
PARIS FOR ME.
WOONCHHA?





A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white, long-sleeved, button-down dress, stands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. She is looking upwards and to the right with a serene expression. The background shows a line of trees and a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

DEATH IS STRANGE.
DEATH IS CHANGE.
DEATH IS SOFT RELEASE.

I AM OBLIVION.
I AM DEATH.
I AM FINAL PEACE.

YOU ARE CALLED
TO HEAVEN'S HALLS,
TO BRING OUR FOES TO ME.

GRIM TASKS ARE YOURS.
FEEL NO REMORSE.
IN DEATH YOU SET
THEM FREE.

I GIVE YOU CALM.
FORGIVENESS, BALM TO
ASSUAGE YOUR SOUL'S
SWEET STRIFE.

FAIR DEATH-SPIRITS,
DEAL DEATH'S DELIGHT,
REDEMPTION AND NEW LIFE.



DON'T DO IT. LET HER LIVE.

IF YOU KILL HER, IT WILL BE CENTURIES BEFORE YOU GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO REDEEM YOURSELF. AND THAT ONLY IF THE WORLD SURVIVES BALA'S VICTORY AND DOMINION.



YOU'RE MEANT FOR GREATER THINGS, KRATHA. DIFFERENT PATHS. THE WORLD NEEDS YOU.

WE NEED TO GET HER OUT OF HERE.

WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION BEFORE. REMEMBER HOW IT ENDED?




WHAT DO YOU WANT, KRATHA? MONEY? I KNOW PEOPLE WHO'LL PAY YOU DOUBLE WHATEVER YOU'RE GETTING IF YOU WORK FOR THEM.

GENEROUS. BUT I'VE GOT TO FINISH THIS JOB FIRST.



AND YOU ARE IN MY WAY.





YOU KNOW ME, CHILD. I
AM BODHA, ALL-FATHER,
SKY-EMPEROR.

IT IS MY FAULT THAT YOU ARE
HERE; MY OWN SON WHO
THREATENS MY CREATION. IT
IS MY OWN BLOOD THAT YOU
MUST SPILL IF WE ARE EVER
TO SEE BETTER DAYS.

I GIVE YOU FLIGHT,
THAT YOU MAY
SET US FREE.

I GIVE YOU LIGHTNING,
THAT YOU MAY SMITE
DOWN ALL THOSE WHO
STAND IN OUR WAY.

I GIVE YOU MY BLESSING,
THAT YOU MAY BE THE
GODDESS YOUR WORLD
AND YOUR HEAVEN NEED
YOU TO BE.

THE GODS
ARE WITH YOU.

AWAKEN NOW,
DEVI. ARISE NOW,
DAUGHTER,
DEATH-BRINGER.

IT IS TIME.



OUT OF DARKNESS WAS I BORN.
INTO LIGHT SHALL I DELIVER YOU.



I KNOW YOU ALL OF OLD.

TOO LONG HAVE YOU BICKERED AND QUARRELED IN THE SHADOWS; NOW YOU MUST STEP FORWARD AND BE JUDGED.

I AM DEVI.



I AM THE VESSEL OF THE GODS, THEIR GAVEL AND THEIR SPEAR, AND I HAVE COME TO EMBLAZON THEIR WILL ON THE FABRIC OF THIS--OF THIS--



URK...

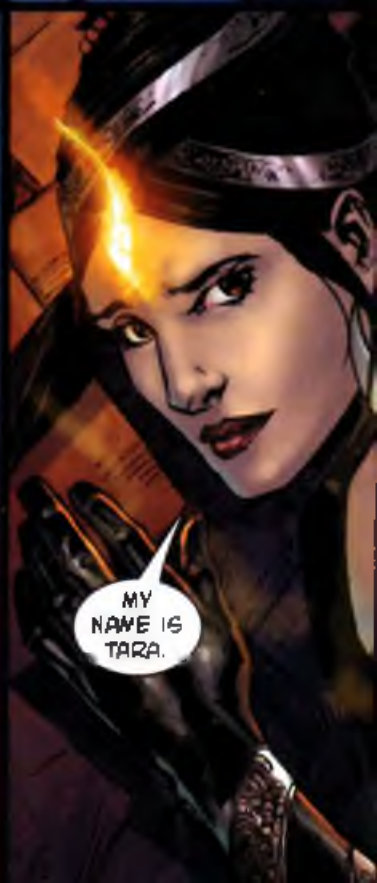


HELP...



IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M HERE NOW.

WHO ARE YOU, CHILD?



MY NAME IS TARA.

IT'S A MIRACLE--YOU'RE ALIVE! ALL I HOPED FOR WAS COME TO PASS!

I DON'T FEEL WELL...

THE ILLNESS WILL PASS, TARA... DEVI. MAY I BE THE FIRST TO WORSHIP YOU IN THIS FORM?

YOU ARE MANKIND'S GREATEST HOPE, AND WITH MY HELP YOU WILL LEAD THIS WORLD OUT OF THE ABYSS INTO WHICH IT HAS FALLEN.

YOUR NAME IS AGANTUK.

YOU KNOW ME?

KRATHA. IYAM. THE COUNCIL. I KNOW THEM ALL.



BUT WHO IS THIS?

I DON'T KNOW, DEVI. HE DIED TRYING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE.



BUT HE IS ALIVE.

THAT IS GOOD NEWS INDEED, MY DEAR. NOW YOU MUST COME WITH ME, TO A SAFE AND SECRET PLACE. YOUR TRAINING BEGINS TOMORROW.



NO THANK YOU.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BEING TRAINED.

LISTEN CLOSELY, AGANTUK. I AM STILL TARA.



THESE POWERS I HAVE, I DID NOT CHOOSE THEM.

I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE MACHINATIONS, GREAT OR PETTY, PLAYED BY ANYONE IN THIS HALL. THIS MAN, ALONE, HAS NO PART IN THE PLOTS BEING HATCHED HERE TONIGHT. HE ALONE FOUGHT FOR TARA. FOR ME, HE ALONE IS WORTHY OF MY ATTENTION.



AND IF YOU, OR YOUR FELLOW SCHEMERS, OR YOUR GODS WANTED ME TO SAVE THE WORLD FOR YOU...



YOU SHOULD
HAVE ASKED ME
FIRST.

TO BE CONTINUED.



Rāmāyaṇ

3392 AD

The original Ramayan is the greatest tale ever told.

It is, seriously.

The original was spoken – yes, spoken by the Indian poet Valmiki – about 2,500 years ago. Part of what makes the original story so cool is in fact the source, because legend has it that before Valmiki turned epic poet (he composed the story via 24,000 stanzas) he was actually part of a legendary group of bandits that roamed the countryside and had quite the outlaw image. Hence, even the story behind the story is a very rich one.

You have to understand that in the East, the Ramayan is so much more than the simple description we give it to try and explain it in the west, “The Odyssey of the East.” Ramayan is the quintessential, seminal myth, the story that is the forebearer of all others. It is the story that every kid growing up, still to this day, hears from his/her grandparents. Its heroes, Rama, Lakshman and Seeta are worshipped, literally. Even its side characters, such as Hanuman, the monkey king, are the stuff that legends are made of. So to reimagine it, to tinker with it in any way, shape, or form is a most challenging and tricky task.

And yet, if you're a creator, how can you not have a take on the Ramayan – the greatest tale ever told?

Our goal from the start of this project was never to retell the original because we wouldn't be able to do it justice. It'd be like trying to do a highschool rendition of Star Wars – you'd be doomed to failure and humiliation. Instead, our mission was to use the original Ramayan as inspiration, let it infect us, seduce us, terrorize us, and then to spin a new yarn by standing on the shoulders of greatness.

Our Ramayan, set in a post-apocalyptic future of 3392 A.D. is a collective effort. We've tapped the wisdom of great creators like Deepak Chopra and Shekhar Kapur. We've relied on the creativity, research, and endless hours of hard work of our creative team including lead artists Abhishek Singh and Ashwin Chikerur, writer Shamik Dasgupta and the man who inspires us and leads them all in India – our President, Suresh Seetharaman. But more than anything, we've trusted that original epic in all its eternal majesty will provide the pulse that keeps our collective creativity going. So far, so good.

I'm not going to gush about our own work because that would be lame. But I encourage you to take a chance on *Ramayan 3392 A.D.*, read an issue, survey the art and send us your thoughts. Because it's everything we are about as a company and as story-tellers. It's why you tell stories and I'm proud of what we've done so far.

Gotham Chopra
Editor-in-Chief



METAL DAVE

DCP