



ISSUE 2

THE TALL TALES OF VISHNU SHARMA

Panchatantra™



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Script
Samit BASU

Art & Cover
Ashish PADLEKAR

Color
**Vishwanath MANOKARAN,
I JEYABALAN**

Letters
Nilesh P. KUDALE

Project Manager
Reuben THOMAS

Assistant Editor
Sana AMANAT

Editor
MacKenzie CADENHEAD

VIRGIN COMICS

Chief Executive Officer and Publisher
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Director of Development
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Chief Visionaries
**Deepak CHOPRA,
Shekhar KAPUR,
Sir Richard BRANSON**

Special Thanks to
**Frances FARROW,
Dan PORTER,
Christopher LINEN,
Peter FELDMAN,
Raju PUTHUKARAL,
Mallika CHOPRA
& Jonathan PEACHEY**



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THE TALL TALES OF VISHNU SHARMA

Panchatantra



Lzo
Thz Lion



Nandy
Thz Bull



Vishnu
Sharma



Bandra
Thz Monkzy



Jack
Thz Jackal

Story so far...

The stories of our childhood are under attack. Sinister figures now invade their worlds, leaving death and oblivion in their wake. The Panchatantra, a book of ancient Indian fables, teeters on the edge of storybook history. But there is hope! The animal heroes of lore—Lion, Bull and Monkey in their modern avatars Leo, Nandy and Bandra, respectively—search for their savior, the true-born guardian of the Panchatantra, the heir to the seer Vishnu Sharma's legacy who would risk everything to save the ancient storyworlds. The thing is... the current guardian has no idea the Panchatantra heroes even exist.

Vishnu Sharma, would-be boy hero, is too busy playing online tournaments to fight storybook wars. But when Leo, Nandy and Bandra show up at his doorstep, Vishnu finds it difficult to separate fact from fiction. The Panchatantra heroes persuade Vishnu to join their cause only to be immediately attacked by a gang of cuddly anime sociopaths and a deadly boy wizard. On the brink of defeat, they are rescued by Jack, a long-lost Panchatantra tale-mate.

But where Jack's been and what he's been doing are anyone's guess. All they know is that it's usually not a good idea to trust Jack... especially when he's on your side....





WE'VE GOT
TO GET AWAY
FROM HERE!

YES, THIS
IS SUCH A DREARY
PART OF TOWN. ZERO
NIGHTLIFE.



READ MY
LIPS, ZOO CREW!
THE-PO-LICE-WILL-
BE-HERE-AN-Y-
MIN-UTE!

NO, THEY
WON'T.



YOU TRASHED
A STREET. YOU
MASS-MURDERED
FLYING POP-CULTURE
ICONS.



PEOPLE
DIED, FOR GOD'S
SAKE. EVERYONE
SAW YOU!



NO, THEY
DIDN'T.



WELL, THEY *MAY* HAVE
SEEN US, VISHNU, BUT THE HUMAN MIND IS
A MARVELOUS THING. IT DOESN'T ACCEPT WHAT IT
CAN'T BELIEVE. THOSE PEOPLE WILL JUST REMEMBER
A BUILDING FALLING OR A CAT LOOKING FOR
LOVE OR SOMETHING. GROWN-UPS WILL CONVINCE
THEMSELVES THEY WERE HALLUCINATING.
CHILDREN WILL REMEMBER, BUT WHO
BELIEVES CHILDREN?





PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF, I'M A DOG OF STEALTH AND HASTE.



HI...JACK, IS IT?

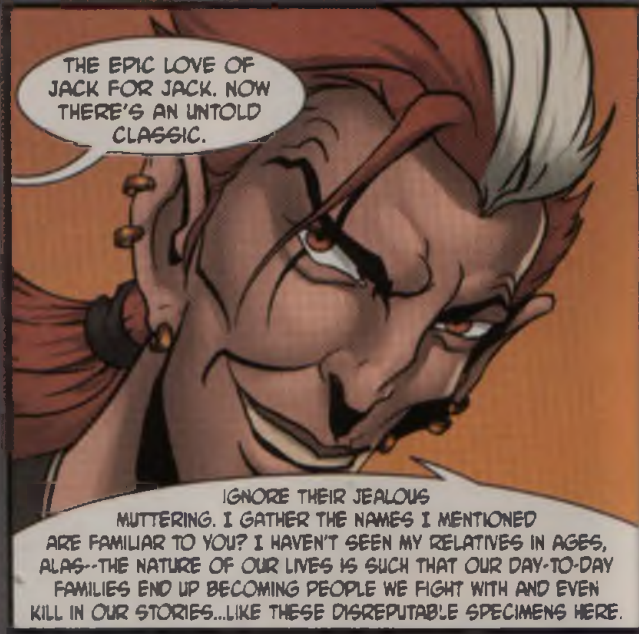
YES, INDEED IT IS. JACK OF ALL TRADES, OF FINE TASTE AND IMMACULATE PEDIGREE, SON OF OLD ANUBIS HIMSELF.

YOU'VE MET SOME OF MY RELATIVES, NO DOUBT--THE DOG IN TWO GENTS OF VERONA? THE REAL HERO OF DEAR MR. FORSYTH'S SLIGHTLY OVERDONE THRILLER?



THERE HE GOES AGAIN.

THE WILY COYOTE? OR HIS GREAT-GRANDFATHER, THE AZTEC UBUICOYOTL? NO? MR. KIPLING'S TABAQUI? SOMETHING MORE CONTEMPORARY? VERY WELL, THE ANTI-CHRIST'S MOTHER IN THE OMEN--MY NIECE.



THE EPIC LOVE OF JACK FOR JACK. NOW THERE'S AN UNTOLD CLASSIC.

IGNORE THEIR JEALOUS MUTTERING. I GATHER THE NAMES I MENTIONED ARE FAMILIAR TO YOU? I HAVEN'T SEEN MY RELATIVES IN AGES, ALAS--THE NATURE OF OUR LIVES IS SUCH THAT OUR DAY-TO-DAY FAMILIES END UP BECOMING PEOPLE WE FIGHT WITH AND EVEN KILL IN OUR STORIES...LIKE THESE DISREPUTABLE SPECIMENS HERE.



JACK!

WHICH EXPLAINS THE BITTER RIVALRIES, THE DEEP LOVES AND HATREDS, AND THE OVERWHELMING TORRENTS OF MAWKISH SENTIMENT THAT SURROUND THIS GROUP LIKE FLIES.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY, VISHNU!

INSECT BADGES.
INSANE PLOTS.
LEOPARDS: CAN THEY CHANGE THEIR SPOTS?
IN LEAFY VALES
TOME-TALES CONVERGE.
WHEN LIGHTS FADE OUT,
SHADOWS EMERGE.



TO WORK,
THEN, MY DUMPLINGS.
WHAT NOW?

WE MUST
GO TO THE OLD
GUARDIAN'S
HOUSE.

SMASHING.
WHY, MAY I
ASK?

WE NEED TO PICK
UP THE GUARDIAN'S
WEAPONS.

BUT
HOW?

A NOBLE
AMBITION, BUT
FUTILE. I WAS
THERE. I LOOKED.
THE WEAPONS
ARE GONE.

WHERE
HAVE YOU *BEEN*,
JACK? WE'VE BEEN
LOOKING FOR
YOU.



I'VE HAD A
FAIRLY BUSY DAY. CAUGHT
A MOVIE. KILLED A FEW OF
THOSE CHARMING CREATURES
YOU WERE PLAYING WITH
A WHILE AGO.

NOT
JUST TODAY,
JACK.



I KNEW YOU'D MISS
ME, YOU SENTIMENTAL
BOVINE, YOU.

WHERE
HAVE I BEEN? HERE
AND THERE. YOU KNOW
HOW IT IS WITH US STRAY
DOGS. WE FLIT. WE MUSE.
WE ROAM. WE PLAY
DETECTIVE.

DO YOU KNOW
WHO'S BEHIND THESE
ATTACKS?



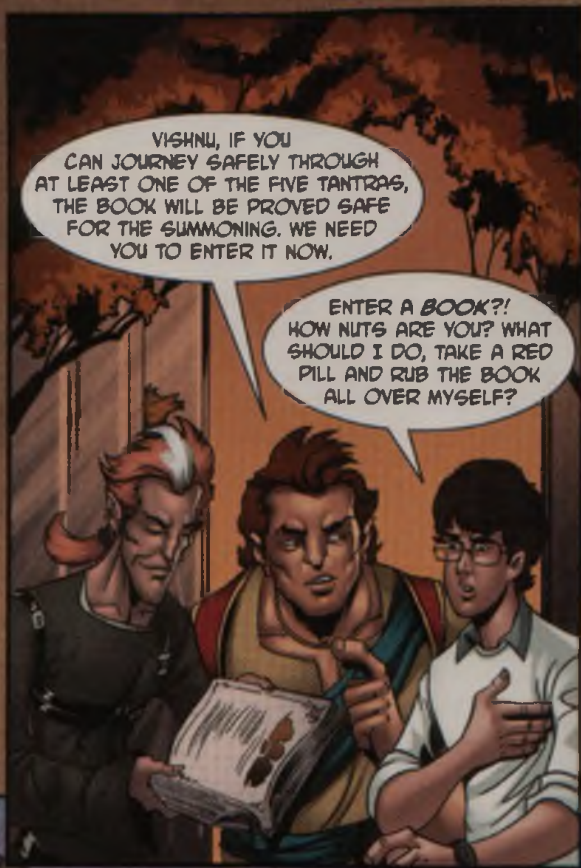
WELL, I DID ASK.
THE LITTLE ONES AREN'T
VERY ELOQUENT, BUT I DID
FIND OUT THEY WERE WORKING
FOR A GENTLEMAN WHO CALLS
HIMSELF *PROFESSOR
SHADOW*.

CONSIDERS
HIMSELF LEARNED
AND FEARSOME,
NO DOUBT.

I'M
POSITIVELY
QUIVERING IN
FEAR.











DON'T WORRY.
HE CAN'T SEE
YOU.

WHO
CARES? CAN IT
BITE ME?

NO, VISHNU.
HE'S JUST THE COBRA,
THE PRIEST DEVA'S SON,
ON HIS WAY TO GET
MARRIED.

RUN THAT
ONE BY ME
AGAIN.

IT'S A STORY
IN THE TOME. YOU'D
BETTER REREAD IT AT
SOME POINT.

WHY CAN'T
IT SEE ME? IS
IT BLIND?

NO. NONE OF THE
TOME-BEINGS CAN SEE
US. THIS IS A BOOK, NOT
A WORLD WHERE THINGS
REACT TO YOUR
PRESENCE.

OH, STORY
BOOKS ARE DIFFERENT
FROM STORY WORLDS. OF
COURSE. I'M AMAZED THAT
WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY
OBVIOUS TO ME.

CHEER UP,
VISHNU. IT'S NOT
EVERY DAY YOU GET TO
EXPERIENCE THE *REAL*
JUNGLE BOOK.





LOOK AT
THOSE TWO--GUIDING
THE GUARDIAN THROUGH HIS
EARLY, FALTERING STEPS.
WARMS MY HEART,
IT DOES.



WHEN I FIRST
GOT TO KNOW YOU,
JACK, YOU WEREN'T
SO ANNOYING.



YOU MUST
HAVE BEEN DAZZLED
INITIALLY BY MY GOOD
LOOKS. I'VE *ALWAYS*
BEEN ANNOYING.



IF YOU INSIST,
TRY NOT TO ANNOY
LEO AND NANDY TOO
MUCH, THOUGH.

GETTING
ALONG VERY WELL,
AREN'T THEY? HMM.
I'VE BEEN GONE
TOO LONG.

I'M WATCHING
YOU, JACK. YOU COME
BETWEEN THEM, AND
I'LL KNOW.



MY DEAR,
THERE'S NOTHING
I CAN DO TO STOP
MYSELF.

MY ROLE IN
THEIR STORY COMPELS
ME TO DESTROY THEIR
FRIENDSHIP. *ALWAYS*. IT'S
NOT EVEN MY FAULT,
JUST WHO I AM.



YOU'RE LIVING
PROOF THAT THIS
IS NOT TRUE.

YOU WERE THE
FIRST ONE OF US TO
REALIZE WE COULD BREAK OUT
OF OUR STORIES AND WANDER THE
WIDE WORLD, EVEN ENTER OTHER
STORYWORLDS IF WE KNEW THE WAY.
YOU WERE THE FIRST ONE TO
BREAK THE RULES.



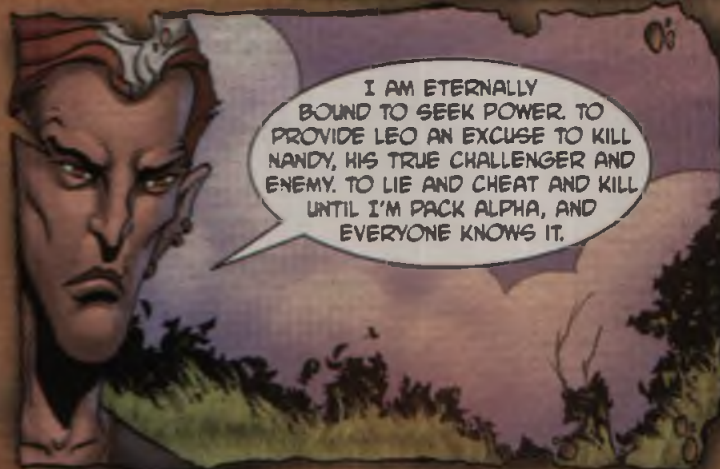
DON'T PRETEND THAT YOU
TRULY THINK YOU'RE BOUND IN
ANY WAY BY YOUR STORY--THAT
YOU HAVEN'T DONE WHATEVER
YOU'VE WANTED TO DOWN
THE YEARS.

YOU *KNOW*
WE CAN BREAK FREE
OF THE STORY CYCLE. YOU
KNOW THAT BETTER THAN
ANYONE. YOU *TAUGHT* US
HOW, DAMN IT.

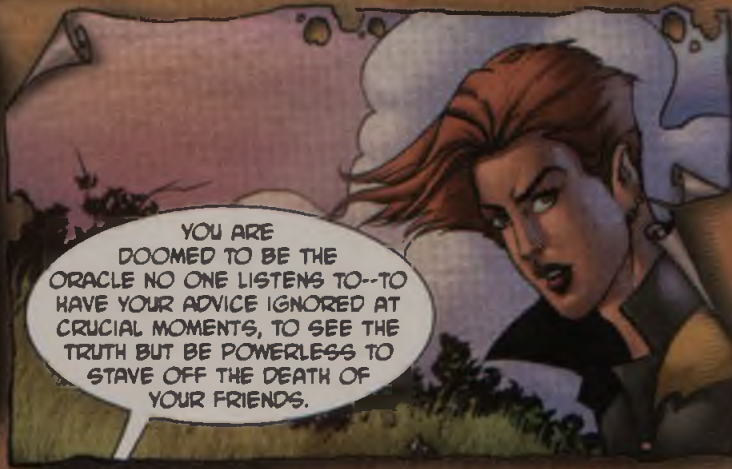


OUR STORIES
ARE WHAT DEFINE US. NOT
OUR ACTIONS, BUT OUR NATURES.
WE CAN BREAK FREE OF TEDIOUS
PLOTS, BUT WE CANNOT CHANGE WHO
WE TRULY ARE WITHOUT REMOVING
OURSELVES FROM OUR
STORIES ALTOGETHER.

BELIEVE
ME--I KNOW.



I AM ETERNALLY
BOUND TO SEEK POWER. TO
PROVIDE LEO AN EXCUSE TO KILL
NANDY, HIS TRUE CHALLENGER AND
ENEMY. TO LIE AND CHEAT AND KILL
UNTIL I'M PACK ALPHA, AND
EVERYONE KNOWS IT.



YOU ARE
DOOMED TO BE THE
ORACLE NO ONE LISTENS TO--TO
HAVE YOUR ADVICE IGNORED AT
CRUCIAL MOMENTS, TO SEE THE
TRUTH BUT BE POWERLESS TO
STAVE OFF THE DEATH OF
YOUR FRIENDS.



THOSE TWO FOOLS
OVER THERE? THEY KNOW THEY
SHOULDN'T TRUST ME, BUT THEY WILL.
THEY CAN'T HELP IT. AND YOU WON'T BE
ABLE TO OPEN THEIR EYES TO THE
TRUTH, BECAUSE THE STORY
PREVENTS IT.



WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, THEN,
IS THAT YOU'RE PLAYING BOTH
SIDES AND USING THIS HALF-COOKED
RUBBISH ABOUT FIXED NATURES AS
AN EXCUSE TO BETRAY US ALL--TO
WATCH AS OUR HOMES ARE DESTROYED.



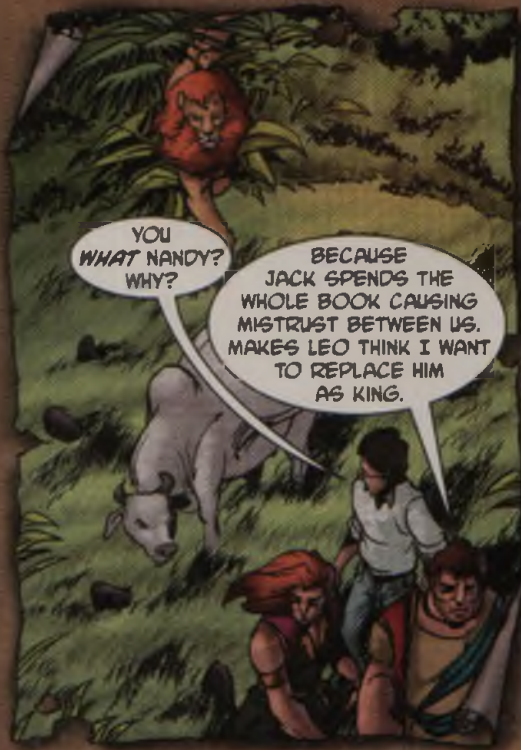
NO. THAT'S NOT IT.
WE'RE ALL IN DANGER AND I'D
LIKE TO RESTORE NORMAL STORY
LIFE SO I CAN GO BACK TO HATCHING
MY LITTLE PLOTS WITHOUT RANDOM
OUTSIDERS TRYING TO KILL ME.
I'M ON YOUR TEAM--

BECAUSE IT'S MY
TEAM. OBVIOUSLY I DON'T
WANT OUR STORY TO BE LOST.
BECAUSE OF THAT, AND THAT
ALONE, YOU CAN TRUST
ME... FOR NOW.



YES, JACK.
TRUST YOU BECAUSE
YOU SAY SO. THAT'S
A NEW ONE.





AND THAT'S HOW YOUR STORY ENDS? NANDY DIES?!



THE BULL DIES. EVERY STORY CYCLE. IN OUR PRESENT AVATARS, WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER, OF COURSE, SO THAT'S ALL BEHIND US.







THE PANCHATANTRA
WAS WRITTEN TO TEACH
PRINCES ABOUT POLITICS.
IT'S NOT ABOUT HAPPY
ENDINGS.



SO, *THESE*
ARE THE STORIES
YOU'RE RISKING *MY* LIFE TO
SAVE? FRIENDS BETRAYING
AND KILLING ONE
ANOTHER?

WELL,
THIS IS HOW THE
FIRST BOOK OF THE
PANCHATANTRA
ENDS.

NO WONDER
NO ONE WANTS TO
READ IT, THEN.



WE HAVE
LINGERED HERE LONG
ENOUGH. THE TOME SEEMS
TO BE FINE, LEO, AND
IT IS TIME TO PUT
IT TO USE.



WE WILL GO
TO KATHAGRAHA, VISHNU,
AND SHOW YOU THE WORLDS
YOU ARE DESTINED TO
PROTECT.



I'M NOT
GOING.

WHAT?!



WHY SHOULD I
HELP SAVE *THAT* STORY?
DON'T WE HAVE ENOUGH BETRAYAL
AND DEATH IN THE REAL WORLD?
WHY DOES ANYONE NEED THIS
RUBBISH AT BEDTIME?



WE'RE ASKING
YOU TO HELP SAVE
LIVES HERE, VISHNU. THIS
ISN'T AN ABSTRACT DEBATE.
OUR VERY *EXISTENCE* IS
AT STAKE.

LOOK...ALL
THIS IS TOO *BIG* FOR
ME, LEO. I'M NO LIFE-SAVER.
I CAN'T GO RUNNING OFF TO
NEVERLAND OR CAMELOT ON
QUESTS AND STUFF.

I'VE GOT
RPGS AND THE SCI-FI
CHANNEL, BUT THAT'S AS
FAR AS I'LL GO. I DON'T *DO*
ADVENTURE. NOT FIRST-HAND.
IT'S NOT...*SAFE*. I'M NOT
A FREAKIN' HERO.



BUT YOUR
DESTINY--

WHAT
DESTINY?!
LIKE IT'S LEO'S
DESTINY TO KILL *YOU*?!
I HAVE A *LIFE*. I HAVE
COLLEGE. FRIENDS. A
GIRLFRIEND, FINALLY. A FAMILY.
A CD COLLECTION FOSSILIZED
BECAUSE OF ITUNES. NOT
THE KIND OF STUFF YOU'D
UNDERSTAND. LITTLE,
BORING STUFF. BUT
REAL STUFF, ALL
THE SAME.



IN THE LAST FEW
HOURS, I'VE BEEN YELLED
AT, BEATEN UP, TOSSED AROUND
BUILDINGS, AND SHOT AT BY FLYING
MONSTERS. THIS MIGHT BE WHAT
YOU DO FOR A LIVING, BUT
IT'S NOT FOR ME.



BUT
WE *NEED*
YOU.

TAKE MY GRANDFATHER'S
BOOK, LIONDUDE. I DON'T
NEED IT OR WANT IT. GOOD
LUCK. *GOODBYE*.

JUST...STOP
THIS WORLD. I WANT
TO GET OFF.





THE MISSING PAGES, I WOULD ASSUME, ARE BEHIND THIS. NO DOUBT NANDY HAS A SOLUTION AT HAND.

I FEEL... WEIRD...

EVERYTHING'S DISSOLVING!

I CAN SEE THAT. WHAT DO WE DO? NANDY?

WE RUN.



EVERYBODY OUT. NOW!

VISHNU, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.



I CAN'T! SOMETHING'S... PULLING...

I CAN'T EITHER! LEO! MAKE A GATEWAY TO KATHAGRAHA!

WILL IT WORK FROM HERE?

WELL, FIND OUT!



GATEWAY'S OPEN!

JACK!

I'M FINE. GRAB THE BULL.

NANDY! HOLD ON TO ME!

CAN'T. SLIPPING.





TO BE CONTINUED...