

DEEPAK CHOPRA & SHEKHAR KAPUR PRESENT

Rāmāyaṇ

3392 AD



ISSUE 4

DASGUPTA/ABHISHEK

DEEPAK CHOPRA & SHEKHAR KAPUR PRESENT
Rāmāyan
3392 AD

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A YEAR HAS PASSED SINCE RAMA'S EXILE FROM ARMAGARH. LAKSHMAN IS ON THE RUN, BETRAYED BY THE COUNCIL AND HIS OWN KIN. IN THE DESERT OF JARA, HE STRUGGLES ONCE MORE WITH KIRAT ASSASSINS—AN ELITE AND SPECIALIZED KILLER FORCE—AND COMES TO REALIZE THAT HIS CHANCES FOR SURVIVAL ARE NAUGHT. HOWEVER, HE IS SAVED BY A MYSTERIOUS MAN KNOWN AS VISHWAMITRA, AND THEY SET OUT TOGETHER IN SEARCH OF RAMA.

IN THE VILLAGE OF THE NISHAAD FISHERMEN, RAMA FINDS ANONYMITY. HIS TRANQUILITY IS BROKEN UP BY THE ARRIVAL OF VISHWAMITRA AND LAKSHMAN.

AFTER VIGOROUS DEBATE AND A GLIMPSE OF A POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING FUTURE (PROVIDED VIA VISHWAMITRA'S POWERS), RAMA SETS OUT WITH THE MOTLEY CREW OF LAKSHWAN, VISHWAMITRA, AND HIS LOYAL FRIEND GUHA ON A JOURNEY THAT WILL DEFINE THEIR COLLECTIVE DESTINY. BUT FIRST THEY HAVE TO GO BACK WHERE IT ALL BEGAN, A GRAVEYARD OF DARK MEMORIES FOR RAMA AND LAKSHWAN: JANASTHAN.



SAKSHI

DANDAKARANYA - 5000
YOJANS FROM ARMAGARH.

TREAD QUIETLY,
WE HAVE COME CLOSE
TO THE ENEMY
TERRITORY.

FOR FIVE WEEKS
WE HAVE BEEN TRAVELING.
HOW MUCH FURTHER IS THIS
MITHILA WE ARE HEADING
TOWARDS?

STOP WHINING AND
FOLLOW MY FOOTSTEPS.
THIS IS THE SHORTEST ROUTE,
AND WE ARE VERY
CLOSE.

I HAVE A
BAD FEELING
ABOUT THIS.

OF ALL THE
PLACES YOU
HAD TO BRING
US TO...

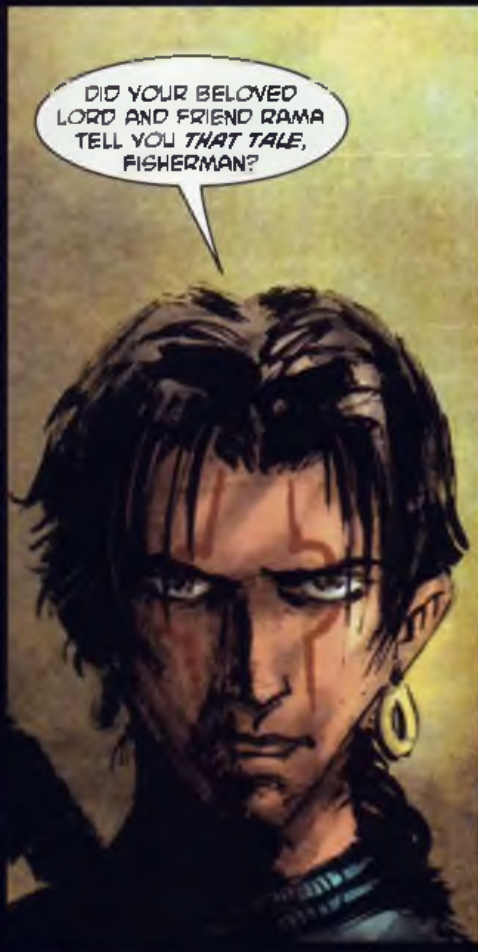


...JANASTHAN!



JAN'STHAN IS ONE OF THE SETTLEMENTS OF ARM'GARH, AIN'T IT M'LORO?

NOT 'IS,' BUT 'WAS.' YOU CAN SEE MY FRIEND, THAT IT EXISTS NO LONGER.



DID YOUR BELOVED LORD AND FRIEND RAMA TELL YOU *THAT TALE*, FISHERMAN?



LAKSH... LET'S NOT DO THIS AGAIN. YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT JANASTHAN WOULD'VE BEEN *DESTROYED* WHETHER WE FOUGHT TILL THE END OR NOT. THE ASURAS WERE MUCH HEAVIER IN NUMBERS. I DID WHAT I HAD TO TO *SAVE* THE REMAINING PEOPLE, THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN... AND YOU, LAKSHMAN.

SURRENDER WAS THE *RIGHT* DECISION.



COWARDICE IS NEVER THE *RIGHT* DECISION.

YOU *BETRAYED* ME. YOU *BETRAYED* ARMAGARH. YOU *BETRAYED* OUR CODE AND OUR MIND!



THIS *COWARD* SAVED YOUR HIDE IN THIS VERY PLACE, SO I *WON'T* MIND TAKING IT NOW.

LIKE BEFORE? BY *BEGGING*? PLEASE, I DON'T GIVE *ALMS*.



SPAKK!

HEY...!

HOLD IT, YOU BUFFOONS!

BEFORE YOU KILL EACH OTHER, WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHY JANASTHAN WAS ATTACKED IN THE FIRST PLACE? THE MOST *OBSOLETE* OF ALL ARMAGARHIAN OUTPOSTS?

DEEP WITHIN THE JUNGLES OF DANDAKARANYA LIES THE LAND OF MITHILA. THE ASURAS ARE SO DESPERATE TO FIND MITHILA BECAUSE WITHIN IT HIDES A MOST *PRECIOUS TREASURE*. IF LORD RAVAN GETS HIS HANDS ON IT, THEN NO ONE CAN STOP HIM FROM RULING THIS *PLANET*.

FORT JANASTHAN POSED A THREAT TO THE ASURAS, AND THEY HAD TO DESTROY IT IN ORDER TO KEEP THEIR OPERATIONS IN THE JUNGLE *UNDETECTED*. ERASING ITS EXISTENCE WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A MEANS TO AN END.

THEY'VE OBLITERATED EVERYTHING. WHEN WE WERE LAST HERE, IT WAS DEEP AND GREEN. NOW I SEE ONLY A *CHARRED LAND*.

MAYBE LAKSHMAN, YOU WOULD HAVE PREFERRED US AND THE JANASTHANIS TO REMAIN AND BE A *PART* OF THIS *NECROPOLIS*.

WHEN THE TWO OF YOU ARE FINISHED SWORD FIGHTING, MIGHT YOU HELP ME GATHER SOME WOOD? I'D BE *IMMENSELY* GRATEFUL.

WE SHALL CAMP IN THE CLEARING. AN OLD MAN *NEEDS* HIS TIME FOR SOME SHUT EYE.

LATER.

ZZZZZZ...

YOUR FRIEND
REEKS OF FISH.
ASK HIM TO SLEEP
SOMEWHERE
ELSE.

IF IT BOTHERS
YOU SO MUCH, PERHAPS
YOU SHOULD GO SLEEP
ELSEWHERE. OR ARE
YOU TOO AFRAID TO BE
ALL BY YOURSELF?



YOU HAD
SOME NERVE... LAYING
YOUR HAND ON ME.
WE ARE NOT OVER
THAT YET.



WHAT DO YOU
EXPECT OUT OF
ME? AN APOLOGY
FOR SAVING
YOUR LIFE?



RAMA, YOU
ARE...



I'M
WHAT?
ENOUGH!
TAKE A WALK,
BROTHER!



VERY
WELL.



SHK SHK



WHO'S THERE?

SHFF...SWRR

STAY BACK-LET ME SEE. THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE LEDGE.



BY THE GODS

HOOOT!



'TIS AN OWL, BY VISHNU, THAT'S THE BIGGEST IF I 'AVE EVER SEEN ONE!



W-HOOOT!

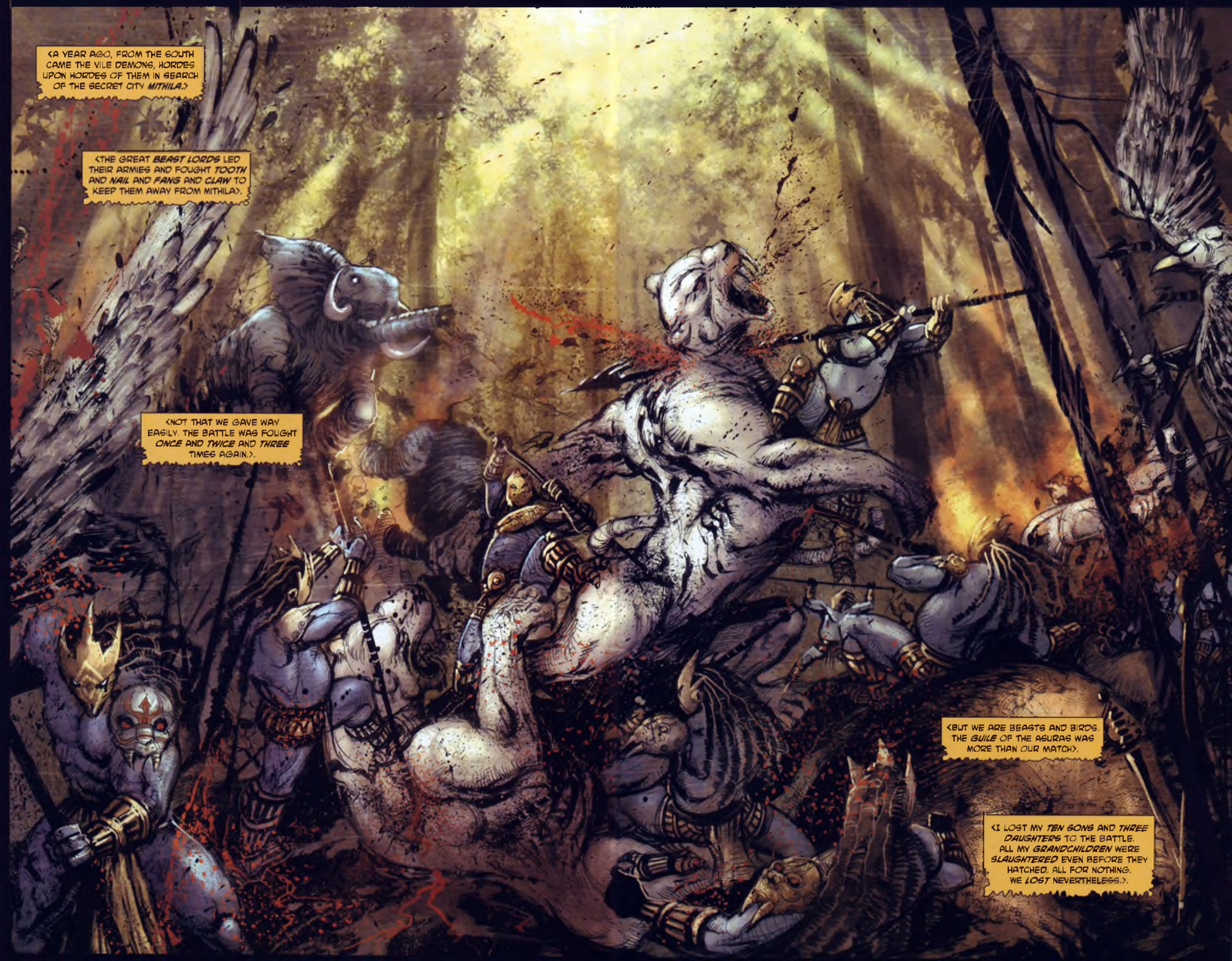


<SO YOU SPEAK THE TONGUE OF BIRDS, OLD MAN?>

<THAT, AND MANY OTHERS AS WELL, GOOD MOTHER. TELL ME WHY ARE YOU ALONE IN THIS FRIGID NIGHT? YOU ARE OLD AND YOUR CHILDREN SHOULD BE TAKING CARE OF YOU.>

<ALAS, MY FRIEND...MY LITTLE ONES SURVIVE NO MORE. THE ASURAS KILLED THEM AND EVERYTHING ELSE THAT ONCE THRIVED HERE.>





<A YEAR AGO, FROM THE SOUTH
CAME THE VILE DEMONS, HORDES
UPON HORDES OF THEM IN SEARCH
OF THE SECRET CITY MITHILA.>

<THE GREAT BEAST LORDS LED
THEIR ARMIES AND FOUGHT TOOTH
AND NAIL AND FANG AND CLAW TO
KEEP THEM AWAY FROM MITHILA.>

<NOT THAT WE GAVE WAY
EASILY. THE BATTLE WAS FOUGHT
ONCE AND TWICE AND THREE
TIMES AGAIN.>

<BUT WE ARE BEASTS AND BIRDS.
THE *GUILE* OF THE ASURAS WAS
MORE THAN OUR MATCH.>

<I LOST MY TEN SONS AND THREE
DAUGHTERS TO THE BATTLE.
ALL MY GRANDCHILDREN WERE
SLAUGHTERED EVEN BEFORE THEY
HATCHED. ALL FOR NOTHING.
WE *LOST* NEVERTHELESS.>

ANY CONDOLENCES WILL BE INSIGNIFICANT O' MOTHER. NO PAIN IS GREATER THAN WATCHING YOUR OWN CHILDREN AS THEY EMBRACE DEATH. BUT KNOW THIS, THEY DIED PURE AND FOR A NOBLE CAUSE.

<TELL ME IF YOU KNOW WHERE WE CAN FIND THE DEMONS FROM THE SOUTH, AND I GIVE MY SOLEMN WORD THAT YOUR LOST PROGENY SHALL BE AVENGED.>



<WITH TWO BOYS AND A FISHERMAN?>

<THAT'S ALL I HAVE. THEY WERE NOT CHOSEN BY ME, BUT BY FORCES BEYOND OUR LIMITED COMPREHENSION.>



ENOUGH OF THIS HYSTERIA AND WHATEVER STRANGE TONGUES YOU SPEAK. FLY AWAY, CRAZY OWL!

<FOOLISH BOY!>

<BEWARE O' ANCIENT ONE, YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY FOOLS WHO DON'T ACCEPT THEIR DESTINY.>

<TRAVEL FURTHER WEST AND YOU WILL FIND THE LAST REMAINS OF THE ONCE MIGHTY ASURAN FORCE. FEW OF THEM HAVE SURVIVED THE WAR, BUT WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH. RUN FAST! MAY THE NORTH WIND WASTEN YOUR FACE.>

<FOR IT SEEMS THE DEMONS HAVE FINALLY FOUND WHAT THEY DESIRE MOST...>



AT LAST WE HAVE FOUND IT! NOW IT IS WORTH EVERYTHING. THE REFUSAL OF REINFORCEMENT, THE LOSS OF OUR INFANTRY, AND THE SCARS THAT WE BEAR SO PROUDLY.

FINALLY, I WILL BE GRANTED A PLACE OF HONOR IN THE HALL OF OUR LORD.

HUSH BOY! YOU MISERABLE WHINER! IF YOU UTTER ANOTHER STUPID WORD, I'LL CUT YOUR TONGUE OUT, AND GIVE IT TO SUBAHL FOR BREAKFAST.

WE ARE OF THE PROUD GRAKSH CLAN OF LANKA, KIN TO THE LORD HIMSELF. I WILL NEVER SHOW WEAKNESS BY ASKING FOR HELP.

GRRUNT...
MAARICH,
COWARD... MOTHER...
KILL MITHILANS...
HGRRRRMM...!

BUT MOTHERRRR...
WHERE WE VENTURRRR
FORTH IS UNCHARTED TERRITORY.
WE KNOW NOT WHAT MITHILANS ARE
LLIKE, HOW POWERFUL THEY ARTRR.
MIGHT AS WELL CONSSIDER
CALLING BACK UP FOR THIS
ONCCCEE.

YES, SUBAHL.
WE SHALL KILL THEM AND
BRING OUR LORD WHAT
HE CRAVES. THEN HE SHALL
REWARD US HANDSOMELY,
INDEED.



...IT HAPPENS
TODAY.

DANDAKARANYA,
NEAR THE CLIFFS
OF GIRID.

NOT EVEN A
NIGHT'S REST...
HUFF... HUFF...

HURRY... HASTE... IF
WE DON'T REACH THERE
IN TIME, EVERYTHING
WILL BE LOST!



FASTER SIR,
MASTER LAKSHMAN,
THE AGED SEER
OUTRUNS US
ALL!



HUFF... WHO
KNEW THE OLD
GOAT CAN SPRINT
LIKE A RABBIT!



C'MON BOYS...
RUN LIKE *KSHATRIYAS*.
ARMAGARH ONCE
MANUFACTURED YOUR KIND
ON AN ASSEMBLY LINE.
YOU FAIL HER...



I'M AFRAID WE
ARE TOO LATE. LISTEN
TO THE WAILING OF THE
WOODS. MITHILA HAS
BEEN *INVADED*.

THE
WOODS ARE
WAILING? THAT'S
RIDICULOUS!



IS IT TRUE
WE ARE HERE BY
ORDERS OF AN
OWL?



FOLLOW ME!
TIME IS RUNNING
OUT!

WHAT?!



I'M NOT SURPRISED.
ALL THIS *DRAMA* TO WITNESS
THE SPECTACLE OF AN
OLD MAN KILLING HIMSELF.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT WAS
WORTH IT.



BUT GIRLS,
VISHWAMITRA IS ONE
OF THE *SEERS*... HE *MUST*
HAVE LEAPT FOR A
REASON.

RIGHT
GUHA...

ARE YOU
OUT OF YOUR
MINDS?!



YOUR *FAITH*
IS YOUR BEST
VIRTUE, MY FRIEND.
LET'S TAKE THE
CHANCE.



AAAAAA...

*BLOODY
HELL!!*

TRIALS OF
THE GODS! I AM
TO FOLLOW *SENILE*
SEERS AND *CRAZY*
RELATIVES!



"...IT IS
BEAUTIFUL!"

IT'S
A NEW
PLANT!

YES LEELA,
FATHER AND I
NURTURED IT IN
OUR NURSERY. IT
IS AN *EXTINCT*
BREED CALLED
CHAMPA.

I LOVE THE
SMELL.

IT IS SAID THAT
THE GODS BREATHE
THROUGH THE PETALS
OF THE CHAMPA
FLOWER.



CAN I WEAR IT IN MY HAIR?

RANI, WHEN YOU PLUCK A FLOWER FROM THE EARTH, AND TAKE IT FROM ITS OWN PLACE, ITS FATE IS DOOMED. IT CAN ONLY SURVIVE SO LONG, NO MATTER ITS BEAUTY.

NOW, WE DON'T WANT THAT, DO WE?

OKAY... THEN CAN I WEAR THEM AFTER THEY FALL OFF OF THE TREE?

THAT YOU CAN, I SUPPOSE.

GOOD GOD!

SSSSRRRRHHHMM...

DID I WHAT'S THAT WEIRD NOISE?

I DON'T KNOW. WHAT IS THAT NOISE?

SISTER

SSSSRRRRRRRRMM...


WHAT ARE THESE CREATURES?!

HELP! SOMEONE HELP!


HEEE... HEEEE... SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN!



... TO COME
UNTO FLAMES AND
FORBID THEM FROM
LIVING, FOR SUCH
IS THE KINGDOM OF
MY LORD.



OH, MY, MY...
WHAT A PRETTY
LITTLE PLAYTHING
YOU CAN BE FOR
MY LORD!



WHY ARE YOU
DOING THIS? WHO
ARE YOU?

TELL ME LITTLE
WENCH, WHERE DO
YOUR PEOPLE HIDE
THE KEY TO MAYA
VIDYA?

MY MASTER HAS
BEEN IN SEARCH OF
THIS 'EARTH MAGIC'
FOR AGES!

UUUNHH..!

MAYA VIDYA...
EARTH MAGIC...
I KNOW NOTHING!
WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT!

NOWWWW
THEN, DON'T TRY
TO BE GOY
WITH ME...



MOTHEEEEEEEEE!

WHAT
NOW?!



NOOOO MY SON!

GHRRA!!!

LET'S END
WHAT WE STARTED
IN JANASTHAN!



I STILL
REMEMBER THE
SUFFERING OF
JANASTHAN. THE
VENOM ALMOST
KILLED ME!
NOW FEEL THE
POISON OF MY
BLADE!



YOU SHALL
PAY FOR
THAT!



MONSTER...CHILD
KILLER!!



WE SHOULD HAVE
DEVOURED YOU ALL BACK
IN JANASTHAN! CURSE
THAT VIV-SHAN!

GHDUNK!

GAH!



URGH...DON'T KILL
ME...PLEASE!

RAMA!



GRRR...
SUBAHL WAS
MY FAVORITE
SON!



THEN JOIN
HIM IN THE PITS
OF HELL!

DIEEE...HUMAN!

HAWAII!



NOT TODAY!

RAAAAAA...

AAAARGHH!



GHNNN...CURSE YOU ALL... MUST...MUST...



whup!



NO...!



HANG ON THERE... I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU DIE...



GHLLL... NO... NO, IT'S TOO LATE... MY TIME HAS COME.



DON'T STAND OVER THERE LIKE AN IDIOT. GET SOME OF THOSE GANDHARVA LEAVES. WE MIGHT YET SAVE HER!



YOU ARE... YOU... ARE...

...THE ONE.



HUFF... HHH... WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT HER? WHY DID THAT ASURA TRY TO TAKE HER? IS SHE THE QUEEN OF MITHILA?

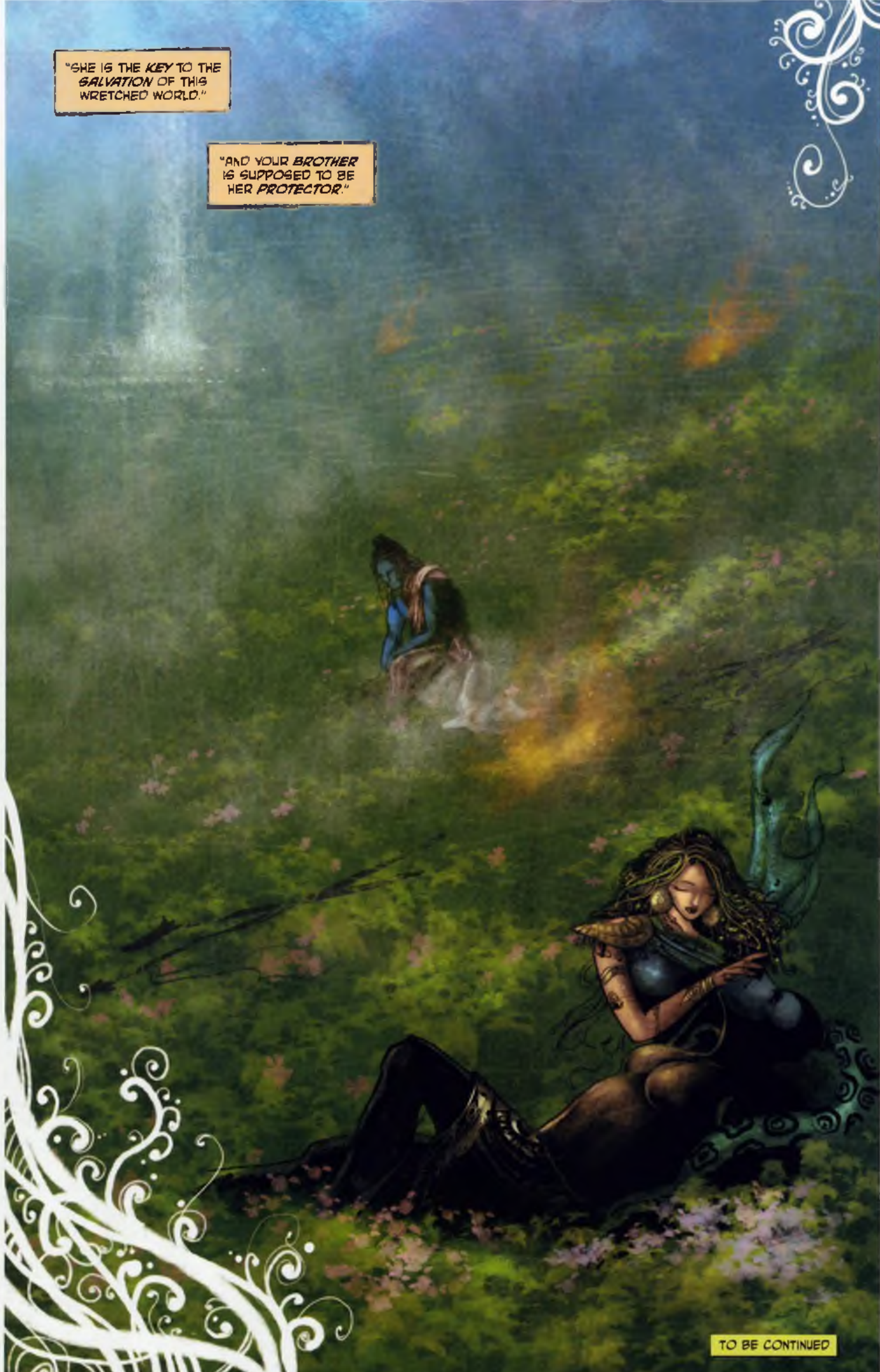


I SUPPOSE NOT, MY YOUNG FRIEND.

SHE IS SOMETHING *MUCH* MORE.

"SHE IS THE *KEY* TO THE
SALVATION OF THIS
WRETCHED WORLD."

"AND YOUR *BROTHER*
IS SUPPOSED TO BE
HER *PROTECTOR*."



TO BE CONTINUED

INSIDE VIRGIN COMICS

HEY...UM..VIRGINS...

Yeah, that doesn't sound so great and we'd love your help coming up with something to call our ever-growing legion of fans. We'll be setting up a place on virgincomics.com where you can offer up your thoughts, so please visit the site and let us know what you think. We could use the help as we've been busy working on the books.

Indeed, it's hard to believe that it was only July when we put out our first comic (*Devi* #1). Of course, even getting that in the stores was the culmination of a lot of work, started a year ago by our editorial staff, both here in the US and India, as well as the rest of the team. But here we are, the new year approaching, with multiple series on the shelves (*Devi*, *Snake Woman*, *The Sadhu*, *Ramayan 3392 AD*, and *John Woo's Seven Brothers*) and a new lot on its way (*Dave Stewart's Walk In*, *Virulents*, *End of Story*, and *Guy Ritchie's GameKeeper*).

In keeping with our original vision, we'll continue to focus on the comic book first but always with the intention of taking each of our stories into that brave new digital and electronic world – games, animation, films, television. And in our first few months, we're making good on that vision. In Asia, you'll very soon be able to catch *The Sadhu*, *Devi*, and *Ramayan* on your cell phones – first as a mobile game, and then, a mobile comic! Check this space for news of similar projects in the US.

But the biggest news to date is our first Hollywood dance-superstar actor Nicolas Cage is set to play the Sadhu in a film evolving out of our comic, *The Sadhu*. We're not going to lie to you – this is TOTALLY AWESOME for us. Again, it's been a unified effort to produce a book that would even catch the attention of such a talented actor and comic aficionado as Nic. But for the two of us in

particular, being in a room with Nic and pitching *The Sadhu* to him personally – “You’ve seen *the Ninja* and *the Samurai* – now see *The Sadhu*” – it will definitely make for one of the best moments in the growing history of Virgin Comics.

Don't get us wrong – our eyes are wide open on this one. We know that it takes a veritable perfect storm to get a movie of this scale made these days. Still, getting where we've got and having the support of our growing fan base feels good and makes us more confident that this crazy dream of creating a comic book company that could serve as the womb for so much more may not be so crazy after all.

In the coming months, we'll continue to keep you up to date on what's happening on the inside of Virgin Comics – challenges, successes, and wacky scenarios – that are the heart of any start-up company. Thanks for continuing on this wild ride with us and keep an eye open for more news soon.

GOTHAM CHOPRA
Editor-in-chief

SHARAD DEVARAJAN
Publisher





METAL DAVE

DCP