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#2.5



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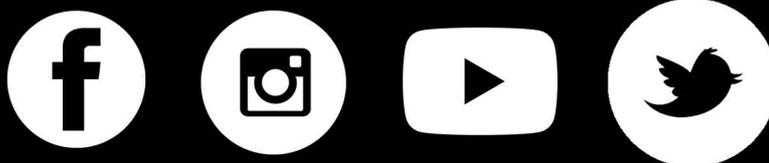
A VORTEX COMICS ORIGINAL



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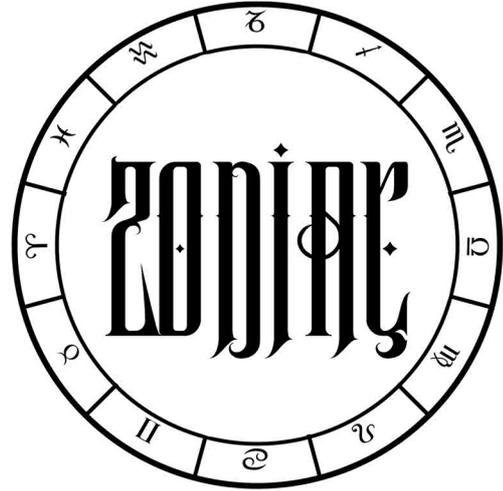
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ISSUE TWO II
MASTERS OF THE DARKNESS



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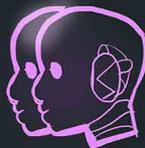
PISCES



SCORPIO



AQUARIUS



GEMINI



SAGITTARIUS



TAURUS

CENTURIES AGO THE DOGON TRIBE DISCOVERED THE ANCIENT SCROLL OF TIMBUKTU WHICH ITS MYSTICAL POWERS UNLOCK THE WONDERS OF THE ZODIAC TO THE CHOSEN CHILDREN.

AFTER CENTURIES OF WAR FOR THIS POWER WITH THE DYNASTIES OF THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE, THE DOGON TRIBE ALMOST A MYTH HAVE DISSAPPEARED ONLY TO RESURFACE WHEN THE ONE TRUE ZODIAC IS READY.

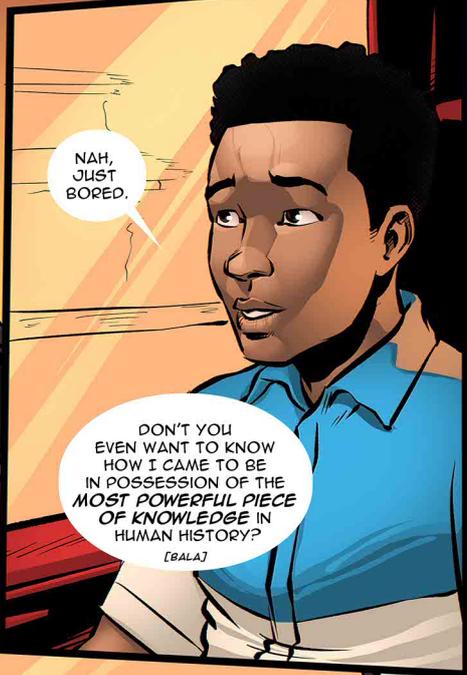
THIS IS THE STORY OF DANKARAN KIETA. THE JEWEL OF MALI. THE PROTECTOR OF THE STARS. THE LAST ZODIAC.

EVENING.

AFTER DR. LOVE/HENON'S ARRIVAL



YOU KNOW, I ONLY DECIDED TO DRIVE YOU HOME BECAUSE I WAS HOPING I COULD TELL YOU EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR NEW FOUND POWERS...
[BALA]



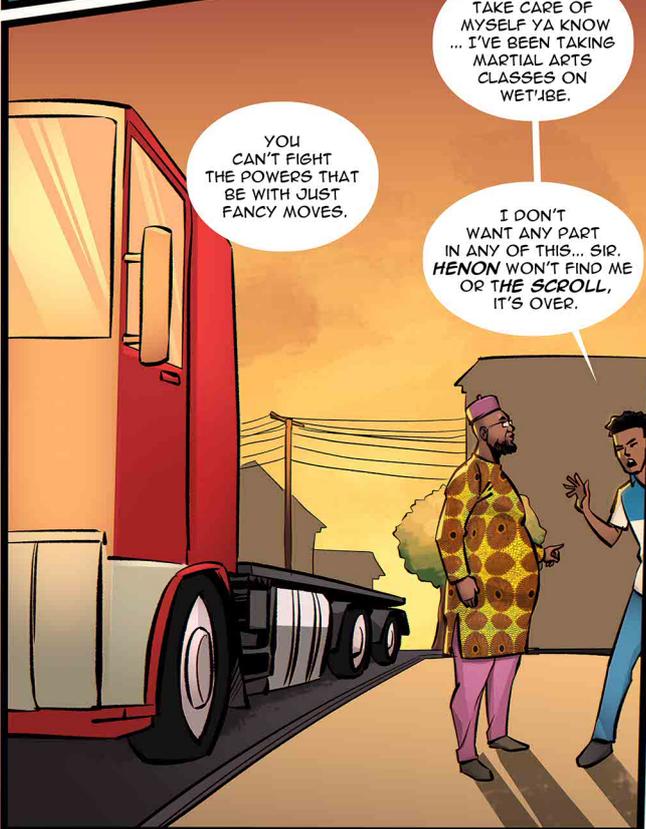
NAH, JUST BORED.

DON'T YOU EVEN WANT TO KNOW HOW I CAME TO BE IN POSSESSION OF THE MOST POWERFUL PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE IN HUMAN HISTORY?
[BALA]



I AM A CUSTODIAN, MY BLOODLINE WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE PROTECTIVE OF THE SCROLL, UNTIL THE ZODIAC IS READY...

THIS IS WHERE I GET DOWN.



I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF YA KNOW ... I'VE BEEN TAKING MARTIAL ARTS CLASSES ON WET'IBE.

YOU CAN'T FIGHT THE POWERS THAT BE WITH JUST FANCY MOVES.

I DON'T WANT ANY PART IN ANY OF THIS... SIR. HENON WON'T FIND ME OR THE SCROLL, IT'S OVER.



YOUNG MAN, I'M NOT DONE TALKING TO YOU.

MOM!

ABOUT AN HOUR AGO.

I AM HENON, VIZIER TO THE GREATEST PHARAOH TO EVER WALK THE PLANET, AND VERY SOON, HE WILL WALK AGAIN.

I HAVE SEEN IT ALL, HIS THRONE AND AN EMPIRE THE SIZE OF A PLANET AS HIS FOOTSTOOL.

NOTHING! NOTHING AT ALL. WE'VE BEEN TO ALL THE HOUSES OF HISTORY BUILT BY MANKIND AND THERE ARE NO WORTHY MONUMENTS HONOURING THE AGE OF MONTU. I SHALL PUNISH HUMANITY FOR ITS INSOLENCE, I WILL FALL UPON MAN AND KIN LIKE A PLAGUE!

I HAVE NO TIME FOR YOUR RANTS.

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I COULDN'T STOOP ANY LOWER, A RAT LIKE YOU ADVISES A GOD TO FIGHT A CHILD.

MENTION IT AGAIN AND RA FORGIVE ME, I WILL TEAR OUT YOUR GUTS, SLIT OPEN YOUR THROAT AND PUSH YOUR GUTS DOWN YOUR THROAT.

IF I MAY SPEAK, O GREAT SKY GOD

IF YOU WILL JUST FIGHT THE ZODIAC.

BUT TO ACHIEVE THIS, I MUST LEVEL GROUNDS WITH AN ENEMY TOO VAST IN POWER, AND THIS ARROGANT GOD IS KEY, MONTU-RA WILL DEFEAT THE ZODIAC, AND BRING THE MY LORD CLOSER TO CONQUEST.

BIRD OF THE NILE, SOARING ALOFT, PAST THE KINGDOMS, BEYOND ITS PYRAMIDS... I WONDER WHO THEY WERE REFERRING TO?

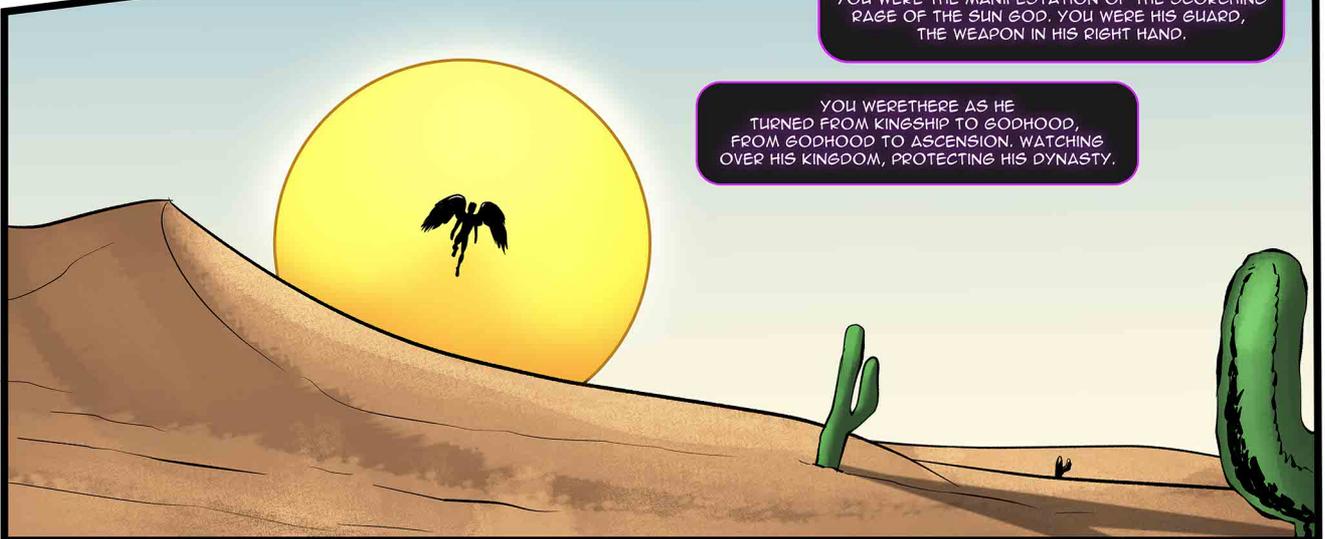
I FORBID YOU TO SPEAK FURTHER.

YOU SEE I KNOW YOU MONTU. I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN.

THE WORLD CALLED YOU MONTU-RA, THE BLAZING WAR GOD OF THE NORTH.

THEY SAY GODS ARE BORN UNDER THE WILL OF RA; YOU WERE THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SCORCHING RAGE OF THE SUN GOD, YOU WERE HIS GUARD, THE WEAPON IN HIS RIGHT HAND.

YOU WERE THERE AS HE TURNED FROM KINGSHIP TO GODHOOD, FROM GODHOOD TO ASCENSION. WATCHING OVER HIS KINGDOM, PROTECTING HIS DYNASTY.





YOUR MERE PRESENCE WON BATTLES. IN YOUR GOLDEN AGE, YOU PROTECTED THE DESCENDANTS OF KEMET, AND THE COSMIC LAWS OF MA'AT.

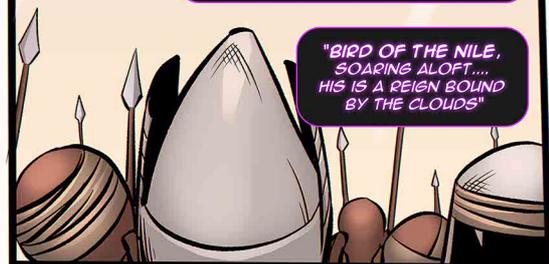


HE'S COMING. RETREAT!

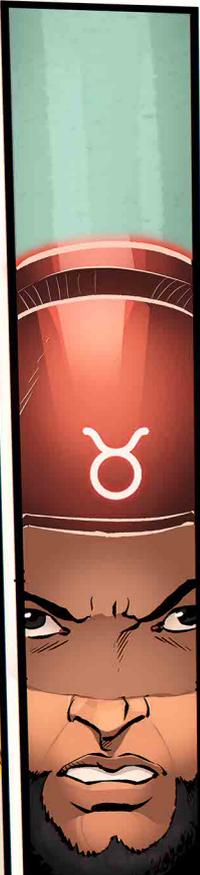


HOW DID THE WORLD SHIFT ITS GAZE FROM AN INDOMITABLE GOD ONCE COMPARED TO HORUS?

HOW DID THEY FORGET ONE WHO INSPIRED MEN TO DO EXPLOITS ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE?



"BIRD OF THE NILE, SOARING ALOFT... HIS IS A REIGN BOUND BY THE CLOUDS"

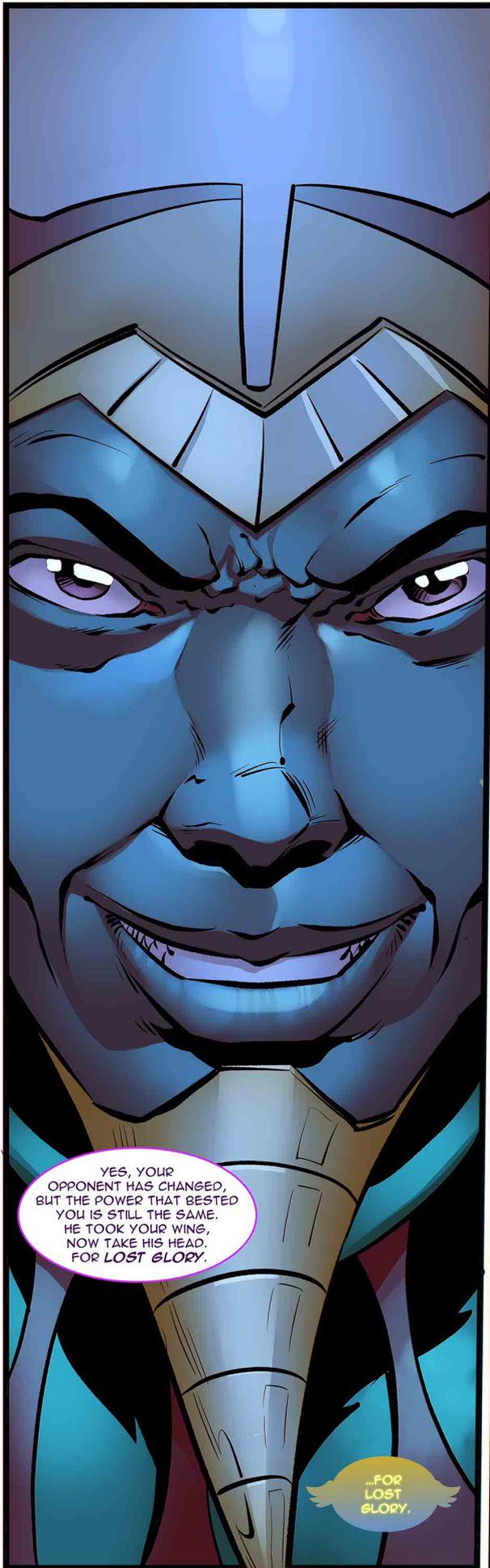


FOR AGES YOU RULED THE SKIES AND EVERYTHING BENEATH. BUT WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU CAME AGAINST A FOE FROM A PLACE BEYOND THE CLOUDS. BEYOND YOUR REACH... A WARRIOR FROM THE STARS.



TO BE DEFEATED BY A MORTAL IS THE ONLY SIN A GOD CAN COMMIT. I TOLD YOU CREATION WAS DRAWN TO POWER. YOU LOST YOUR PLACE, AND MEN AND GODS TURNED FROM YOU.

YOU DESTROYED THE INSCRIPTIONS OF KADESH, HOPING THE WORLD WILL FORGET YOUR LOSS, BUT IN THE END, THE ONLY THING THEY FORGOT WAS YOU.



YES, YOUR OPPONENT HAS CHANGED, BUT THE POWER THAT BESTED YOU IS STILL THE SAME. HE TOOK YOUR WING, NOW TAKE HIS HEAD. FOR LOST GLORY.

...FOR LOST GLORY.



I HAVE BEEN TRACKING HIM SINCE OUR LAST ENCOUNTER. HERE IS HIS DOMAIN. WAIT HERE, MY LORD.



LESS THAN AN HOUR AGO.

AT DANKA'S RESIDENCE

FORGIVE ME, MY DEAR BUT I'M AFRAID I MUST REFUSE. AVERT THE FRIVOLITIES.

THE REASON FOR MY PRESENCE IS ONE OF UTMOST URGENCY AND WE MUST ATTEND TO IT IMMEDIATELY.

YOU TAKE YOUR JOB, SERIOUSLY DON'T YOU?... I LIKE A SERIOUS MAN.

KAF! KAF! ER... YES. SO, WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT DANKA?

WELL... HE'S SMART. VERY TIMID. AND HE REALLY CARES ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE... SOMETIMES HIS TEMPER GETS THE BEST OF HIM.

I WAS IN A BAD PLACE THEN... 12 YEARS OF MARRIAGE, 2 DIVORCES, NO CHILDREN. I SERVED AS A NURSE FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.

AFTER A WHILE YOU GET TIRED OF BRINGING A BABY INTO T HIS WORLD, WIPING ITS TEARS AND THEN REMEMBERING IT WILL NEVER BE YOURS.

OKAY, OKAY. YOU NEEDED A CHILD; CAN WE GO BACK TO DANKA NOW?

9 YEARS AGO.

IYANA IPAJA MARKET.

IT WASN'T THAT SIMPLE THOUGH I WANTED A CHILD, BUT I'D NEVER CONSIDERED ADOPTING ONE,

YOU CAN'T TELL A NURSE, A CHILD THAT DIDN'T COME FROM HER UTERUS IS HER OWN. AND ESPECIALLY NOT A BOY THAT TRIED TO STEAL FROM ME.

HEY STOP! STOP!

SWOOP



OF COURSE, I DIDN'T SHOUT *OLÉ!* WHY? DO YOU WANT AN ANGRY CROWD TO LYNCH A TEN-YEAR-OLD? I'M GOING TO--- I'LL CALL YOU BACK.

I-- I AM SORRY. I WAS JUST HUNGRY.



...Awwww

DO YOU WANT SOME FOOD?



RE-- REALLY?



ICE... CREAM?

REALLY. AND WHEN WE ARE DONE, I HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND.

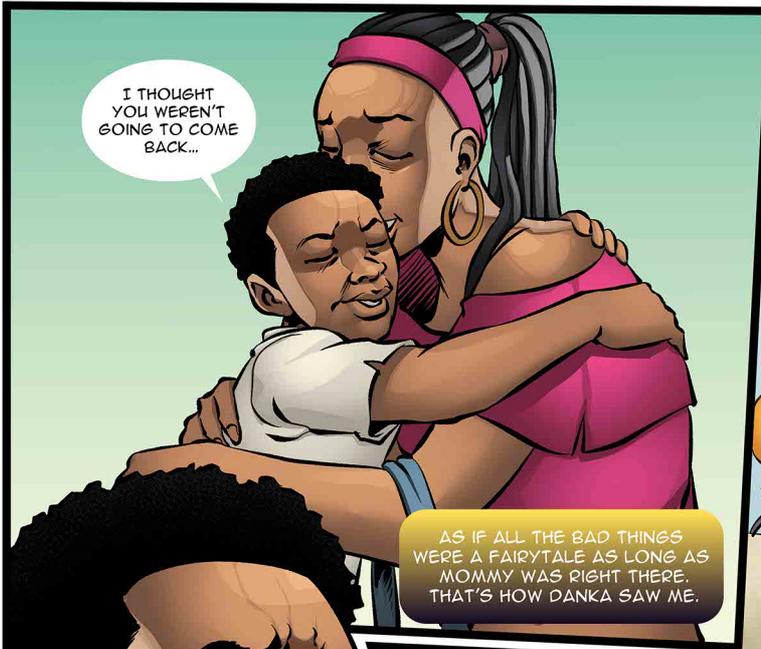


IT WASN'T ABOUT HIS EYES BUT THE WAY THEY LOOKED AT ME: TRUST, I HAD SEEN IT A THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE,



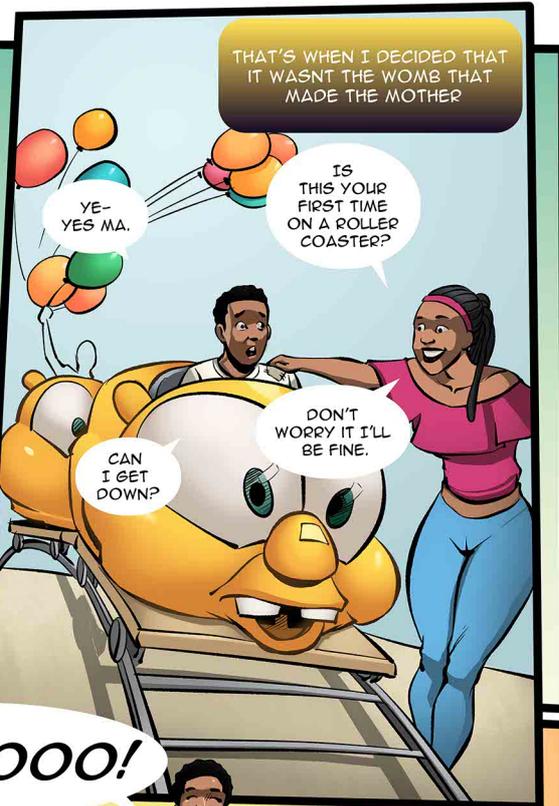
BABIES IN MY ARMS WILL NOT STOP CRYING TILL MOTHER HELD THEM, A TODDLER WON'T LET ME APPLY A BANDAGE TILL THEY GRASPED MOMMY'S THUMB, KOFO WAVES FROM A DISTANCE,

NOT TOO FAR THOUGH. DANKA'S FACE BRIGHTENS LIKE NEVER BEFORE. EXTREME HAPPINESS.



I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T GOING TO COME BACK...

AS IF ALL THE BAD THINGS WERE A FAIRYTALE AS LONG AS MOMMY WAS RIGHT THERE. THAT'S HOW DANKA SAW ME.



THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED THAT IT WASN'T THE WOMB THAT MADE THE MOTHER

YE-YES MA.

IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME ON A ROLLER COASTER?

DON'T WORRY IT'LL BE FINE.

CAN I GET DOWN?



WOOOOOO!

DANKA DIDN'T HAVE A LOT OF REASONS TO. HE LOST HIS MOTHER, BIRTHING HIM, HIS LIFE DIDN'T GET BETTER.



!



OH MY GOD! DANKA!



WHY DID THEY DO THIS?

....

ITS ALRIGHT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TELL ME.



LET'S PLAY A GAME I CALL 3 QUESTIONS!

YOU MADE IT UP, DIDN'T YOU?

IT WILL STILL BE FUN

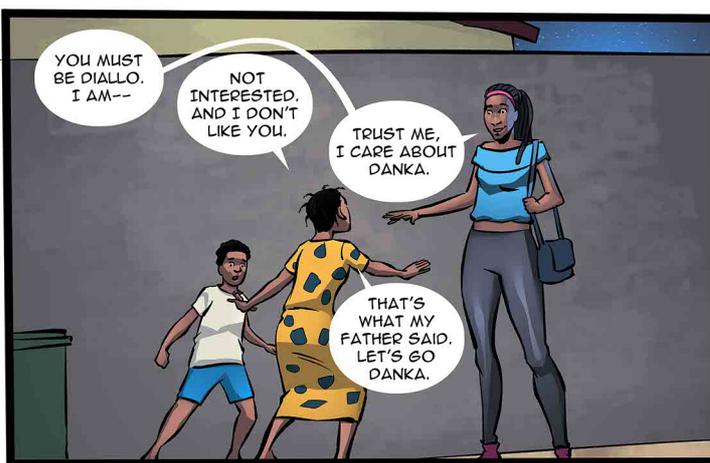
IS IT TRUE RAINBOWS ARE GOD'S VOMIT? AND STARS ARE UNKEPT PROMISES?

AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT DIALLO SAYS...DADDY SAYS THEY'RE ARE OUR ANCESTORS.

YOU ARE ONE FUNNY KID.

WHAT'S FUNNY?

HEY! STAY AWAY FROM MY BROTHER!
[DIALLO]



YOU MUST BE DIALLO. I AM--

NOT INTERESTED. AND I DON'T LIKE YOU.

TRUST ME, I CARE ABOUT DANKA.

THAT'S WHAT MY FATHER SAID. LET'S GO DANKA.



HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN HER?

MS. KOFO.. I HAVEN'T ASKED MY THIRD QUESTION ...WILL YOU BE MY MOMMY?



WH-- WHAT?!



DANKA...



TOUCHING STORY. REALLY. BUT NOW I'M AFRAID, WE, I MEAN HE, IS GOING TO HAVE TO KILL YOU NOW.



?!?

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#2.5




ESEM JAY

NOW.

ON DANKA'S SCENE

I'M SORRY DANKA... SHE'S GONE.

YOU DIDN'T KILL HER.

IT'S NOT TRUE. IT'S NOT TRUE. I CAN'T KILL MY MOTHER AGAIN. IT'S NOT TRUE.

OH YES, HE DID. HIS ACTIONS LED TO HER DEATH. HER MURDER WAS A WARNING, NOW YOU KNOW WHAT I'LL DO TO EVERYONE ELSE YOU CARE FOR, UNLESS I GET WHAT I CAME FOR.

I HAVE SCOURED THIS ABODE, AND THE SCROLL IS NOT HERE! WHERE DID YOU HIDE IT BOY!

WHY? WHY HER?

WHY

HER!!!



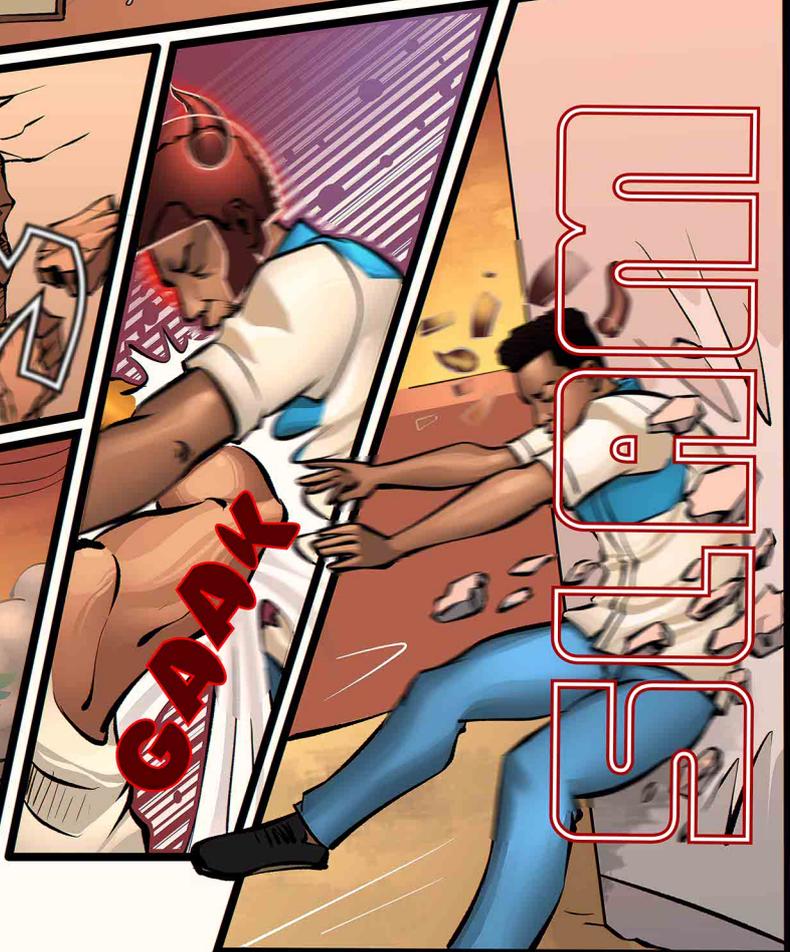
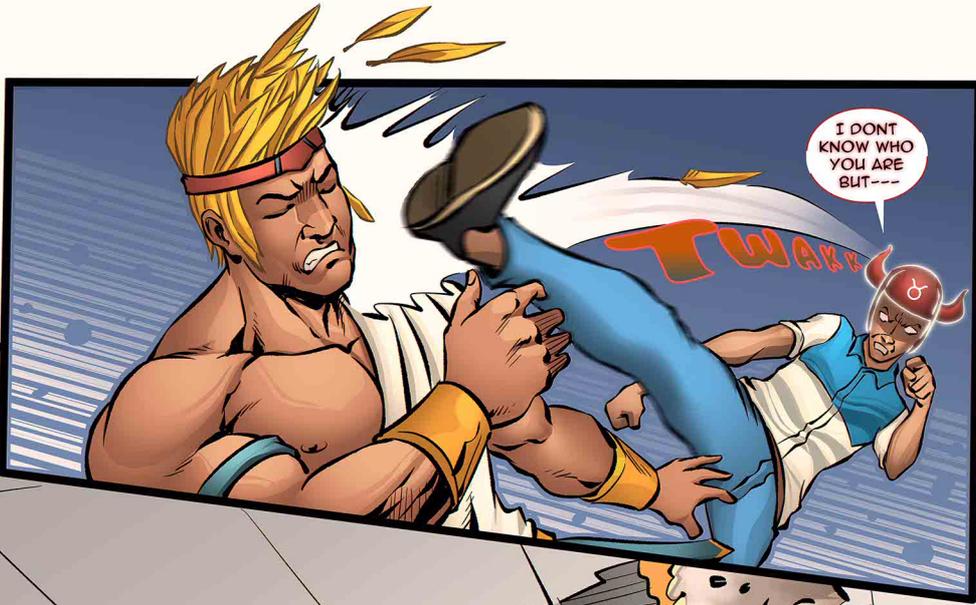
AAAAARRR.....



....RRRGHHHH!



HERALD OF LIBRA, IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN DO?



**REEL
IN
S**





I HAVE REVEALED MY SCARS,
THE BROKEN FLIGHT OF A SKY GOD.
SO YOU CAN REMEMBER YOUR ATROCITIES,
AND SO THAT THE WORLD KNOWS,
THAT SCARRED OR NOT, THE
SKY GOD TRIUMPHS.



PERHAPS, I UNDERESTIMATED THE
VENGEFULNESS OF THE SKY GOD,
HE KILLS HIM NOW AND THE SCROLL
MAY BE LOST FOR EONS.
I AM HENON AND I AM NEVER WRONG.
EXCEPT TODAY

AKKK...
KK...K!

WOOSH

SK-BOOM

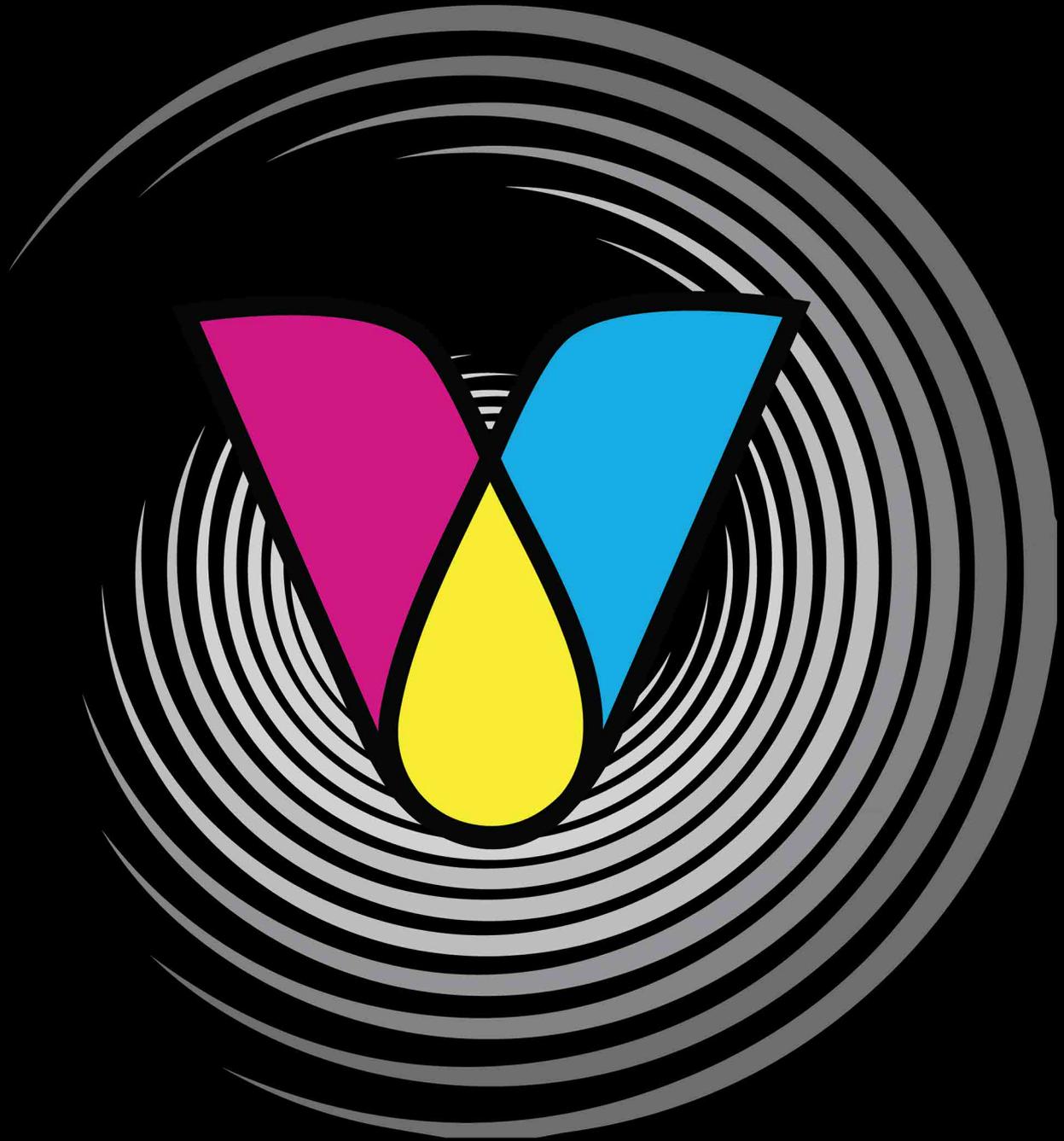


I TOOK YOUR MOTHER'S LIFE,
AND IN SO DOING, GRANTED
YOU THE GREATEST GIFT A
WAR GOD CAN GRANT A WARRIOR,
A VENGEFUL SPIRIT. AND YOU DON'T
EVEN LAST A MINUTE IN A
FIGHT I HAVE DREAMT OF FOR
A THOUSAND YEARS ...

STOP WRIEGLING.
IT DOES NOT BEFIT A ZODIAC.
IF YOU CANT FIGHT LIKE A WARRIOR
THEN HAVE THE DIGNITY TO DIE LIKE ONE.
TODAY, THE PRESENT WILL REDEEM
... EVERYTHING.

TO BE CONTINUED

KUUNGANA



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