



PRIYA AND THE LOST GIRLS

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PRIYA AND THE LOST GIRLS

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“Gender Equality Champion” — UN WOMEN

www.priyashakti.com

Pages in the comic book also contains
bonus augmented reality content viewable with ARTIVIVE

Download the free APP at artivive.com and scan the comic book's pages to view animation, real-life stories, films, and other interactive elements that take you beyond the story. #standwithpriya

“Priya's Shakti is the first Indian comic book of its kind – not only confronting teenagers with the sensitive issue of sexual violence, but also engaging young people through its innovative use of augmented reality technology.” — REUTERS

“There is a new weapon in the battle to prevent violence against women in India — a comic book.”

— THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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CREDITS: DIPTI MEHTA, Co-Writer. RAM DEVINENI, Producer and Co-Writer. SYD FINI & NEDA KAZEMIFAR, Artists. RUCHIRA GUPTA & LINA SRIVASTAVA, Advisors. SHUBHRA PRAKASH, DAVID ROJAS-LEON & MARGARITA KOROL, Co-Producers. JOAN HILTY & CATHERINE FLETCHER, Copy Editors. KARINE BENDER, Portuguese Translation. MILA FAHREN, Italian Translation. NATALIA CONTRERAS DE LA LLAVE, Spanish Translation. Developed at Crossover Labs. Printed by Communications Solutions in India. Special thanks to Kellyn Mahan, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, and Vanessa Rodriguez. The comic book is dedicated to poet, friend, and teacher Meena Alexander, who was the inspiration for series.

Priya and the Lost Girls is based on the life of Ruchira Gupta and her journey from making the documentary *The Selling of Innocents* to building **Apne Aap Women Worldwide**, an NGO that works to end sex trafficking, while simultaneously working with the United Nations to devise better policies for the poor and young often neglected by society. The story highlights crucial moments in the lives of **Apne Aap** women and children; trafficking survivors that freed themselves from a system of inter-generational prostitution in India. Through the lens of both Ruchira's and the survivors' experiences, **Apne Aap** has designed a campaign called *The Last Girl* to draw worldwide attention to the plights of the 13-year olds in brothels and the 15-year olds standing on street corners. View videos about **Apne Aap** through the augmented reality app Artivive.

Learn more and support the campaign at www.apneaap.org/donate

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Look, Sahas, we are home!



As Priya and Sahas walk through the village, she notices there are no girls, only older women and men.



Priya touches her parents' feet to receive their blessings.

I didn't see any girls in the village. Where is Lakshmi?



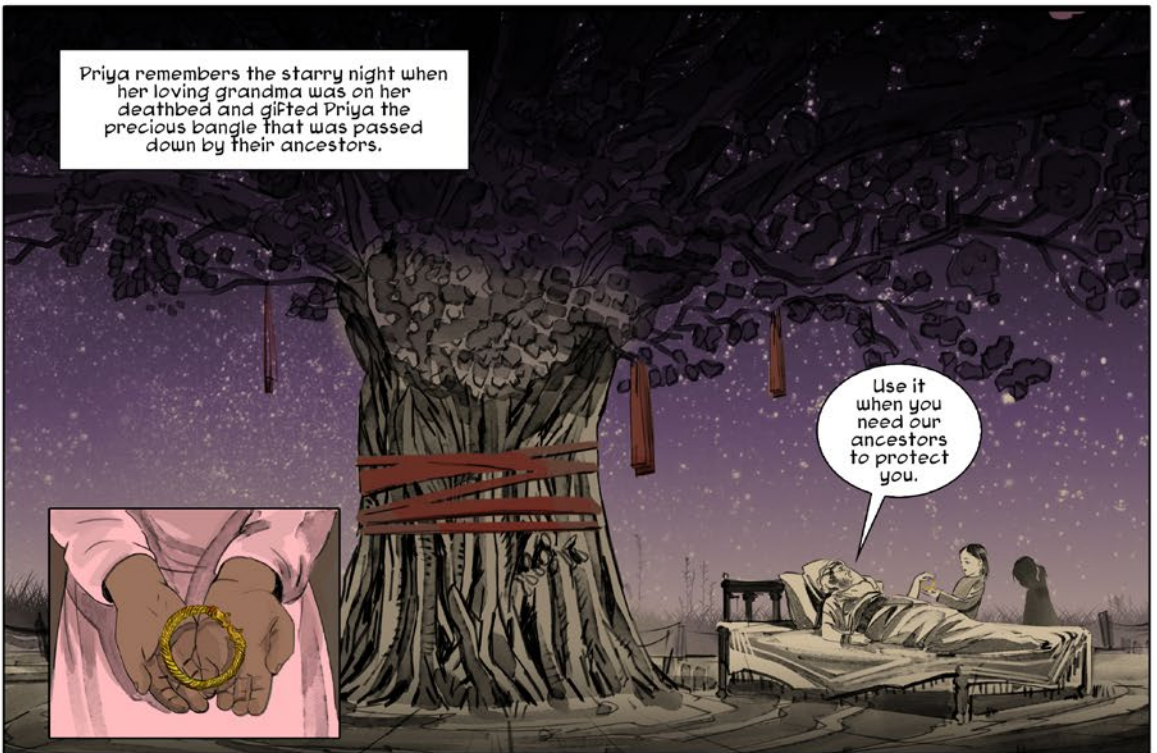
Your sister went to work, but we have not heard from her since.

We should have never sent her. I hope she is okay.

Shut up! Pumb woman.



Father, stop talking like that to Maa. Don't worry. I'll find her.





Something is wrong, Sahas. The village is empty of girls and nobody will say why!



I want the bangle!

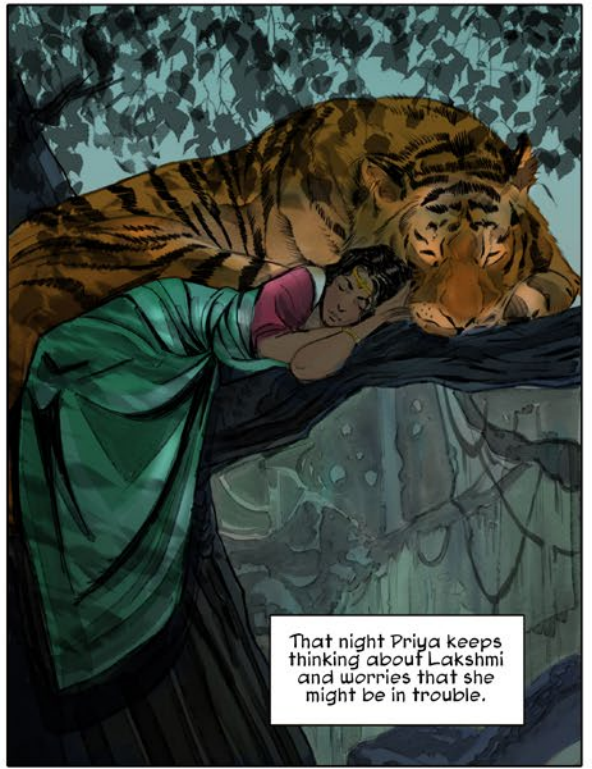
No, Lakshmi! Dadee gave it to me.

Lakshmi, don't fight with your sister.

Priya remembers how much Lakshmi loved Dadee's bangle.



No! It's mine.



That night Priya keeps thinking about Lakshmi and worries that she might be in trouble.



One day you will be even better than me!

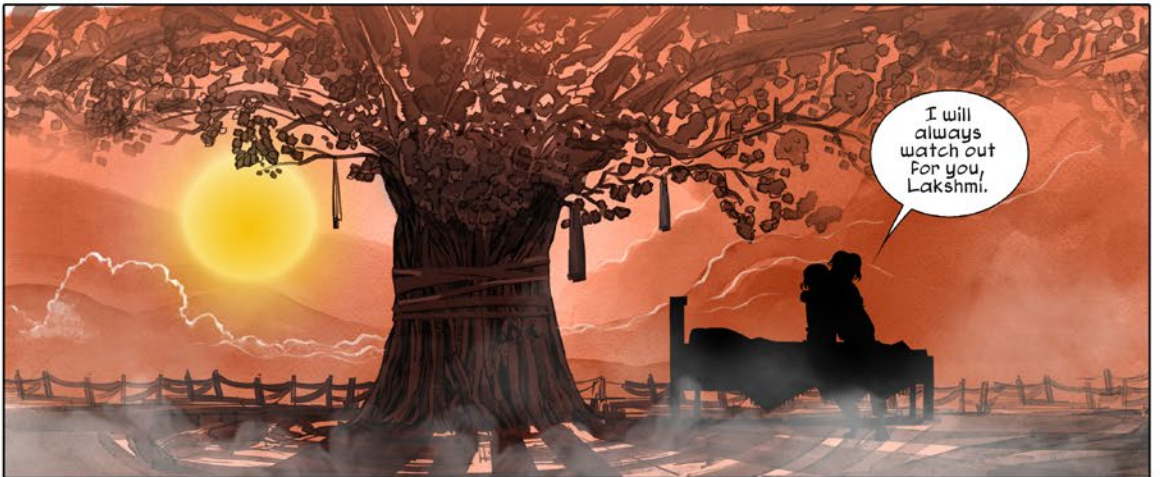
I hate that you always win.



One night, Lakshmi came down with a deadly Fever.



You stayed up to watch me all night.



I will always watch out for you, Lakshmi.





Lakshmi!
She is in
trouble,
Sahas.



Let's
find
Rahu!

As they travel north, the harsh smell
of sulphur begins to fill the air.



Oh Sahas,
the smell is so
strong. Your
poor tiger
nose!

Below they see a
woman turning
into stone. Her life is being
squeezed out of her.



Water..

...Water,
please.



Who are you?
And what happened to you?

I am Ambika. I was thrown out of Rahu because I am too old. I will die like others before me.

Ambika takes her last breath as her arms and hands start turning to stone.



I can't feel my legs. I am dying.



Sahas's magical tears slowly turn Ambika back into flesh.



Thank you for saving me.



There are many girls like me downstairs. Please, help them.



They are in Rahu, a place ruled by fire.



Welcome!
Rahu will love
you for your
service.

What
service?
Who are
you?



I am Rahu,
the king of
this city,
where women
serve men.

I have
never heard
of you
before.

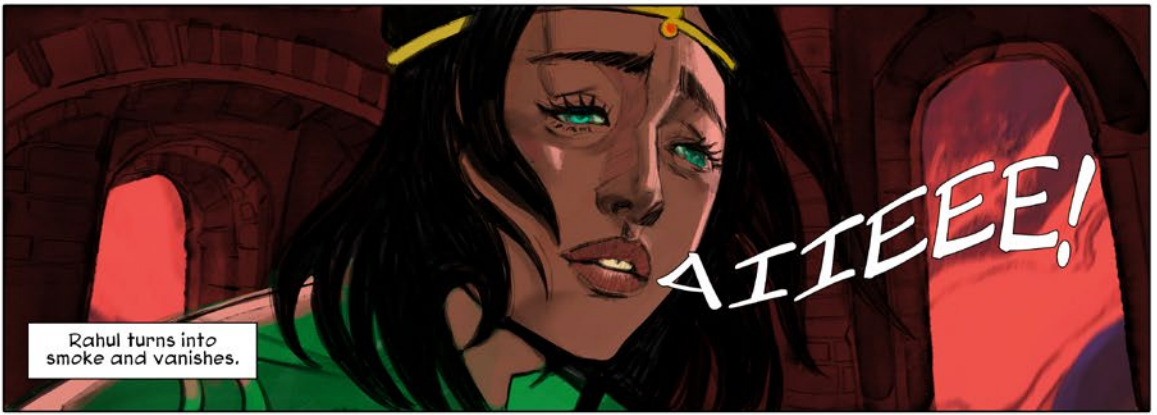


I was there
when you sinned.
Had you given
yourself happily
to those men,
you wouldn't have
suffered!

You are
disgusting. I will
fight anyone who
harms a woman.



Next time it will be
your face. I will burn
you alive if you don't
follow my rules.



Rahul turns into smoke and vanishes.



You will burn the other hand too if you touch that wound, Priya!

How do you know my name?



I know many things!



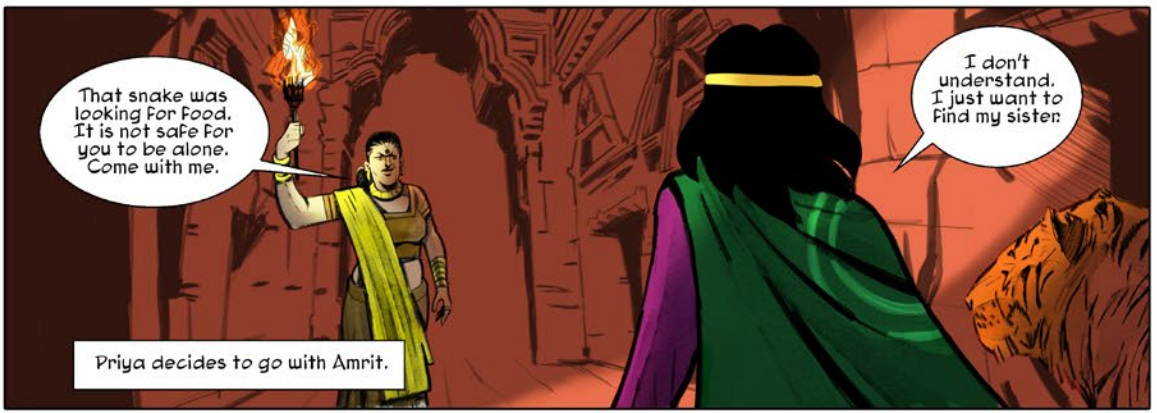
Wrap it with these and your wound will heal.

Don't listen to this half-snake. She was about to put the blue poison on your hand.

Manidhari is about to put the blue leaves on Priya's hand when Amrit suddenly appears.



Manidhari fears the flaming torch and slithers away into the woods.



That snake was looking for food. It is not safe for you to be alone. Come with me.

I don't understand. I just want to find my sister.

Priya decides to go with Amrit.



You can't bring that tiger with you. The girls will get scared.

But he is my friend.

Your Furry toy and you can stay right here then!

As Amrit walks away, Priya thinks of a plan.



Quick, Sahas! Jump into my heart before she notices.



Priya's tiger heart is always within her even when Sahas is not with her in 'person'!



Priya notices volcano channels flowing through the streets and...



...little shops that sell drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and things for women.



Clang of a big gong is heard. It rings 7 times.



She seems strange, but maybe she can help me find Lakshmi.

The gong rings when it's time to work.

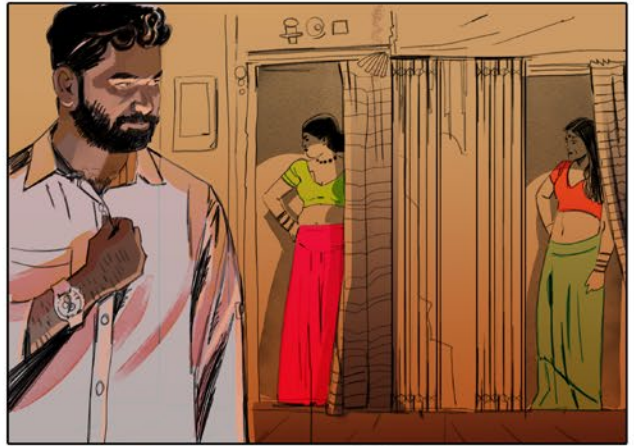
I am Amrit. I was the first girl to come to Rahu. Now I show Rahu's ways to new girls.



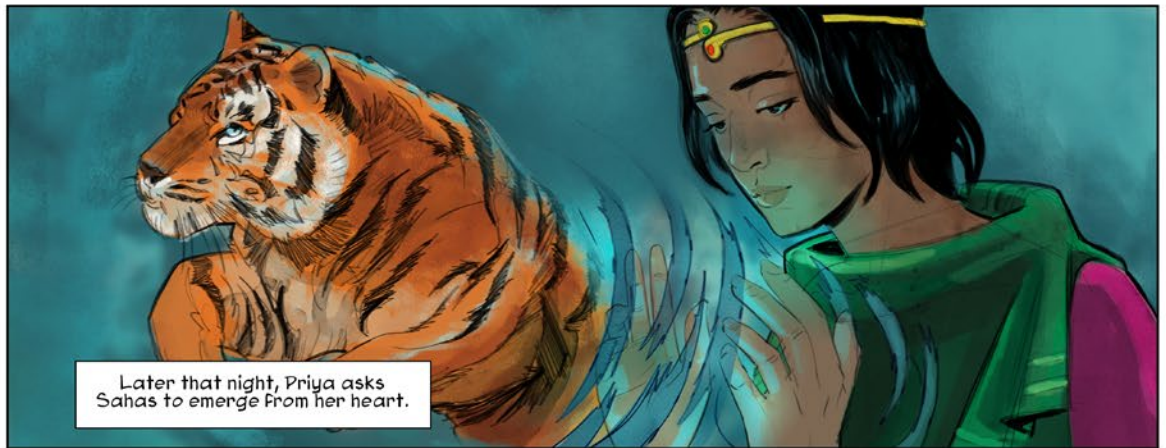
More lava seeps out of the volcano and into the streets, illuminating the whole city in an orange glow.



Lots of women come outside. Men start looking at them, choose the ones they like, and take them to private rooms.



My girls don't follow the gong. If you work for me, you only have to see 5 or 6 men a night, not 20.





I was right about Amrit. Sahas, we need to be very careful. I must think of a plan.

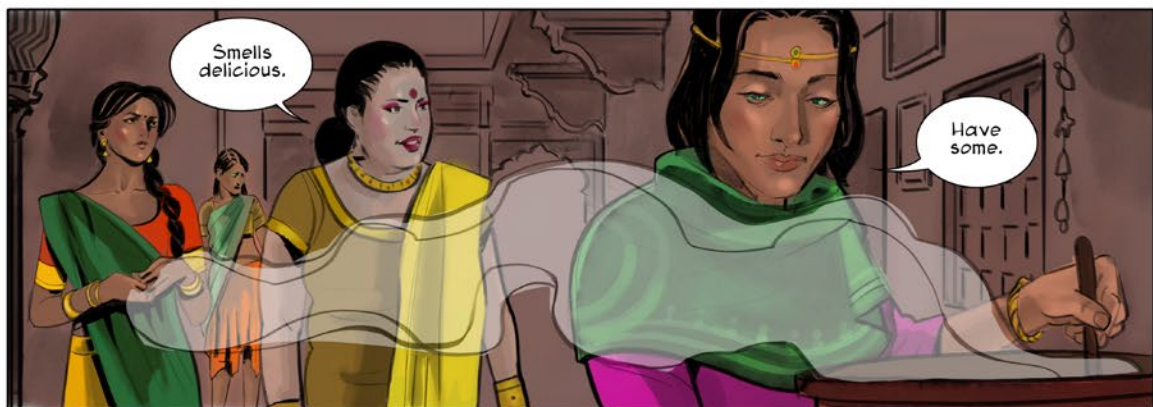
Five days since you worked. Do you want to be cast out of Rahu and turn you to stone?



I have an idea. Mother used to say, "Feed salt, get loyalty." Maa's puri bhaaji are the best. Let's find the kitchen.



Once Sahas has leapt back inside her heart, Priya finds the kitchen and starts cooking.



Smells delicious.

Have some.



Lakshmi!



Laila, this poor girl is looking for her sister Lakshmi. You must look like her.

My name is Laila.



Why is Lakshmi refusing to recognize me? This doesn't seem right!

I am not your sister. Don't bother me.

Priya is shocked but also notices that there is something different about Lakshmi. She keeps cooking.



The outside world is dangerous. I was raped in my village by 4 men.

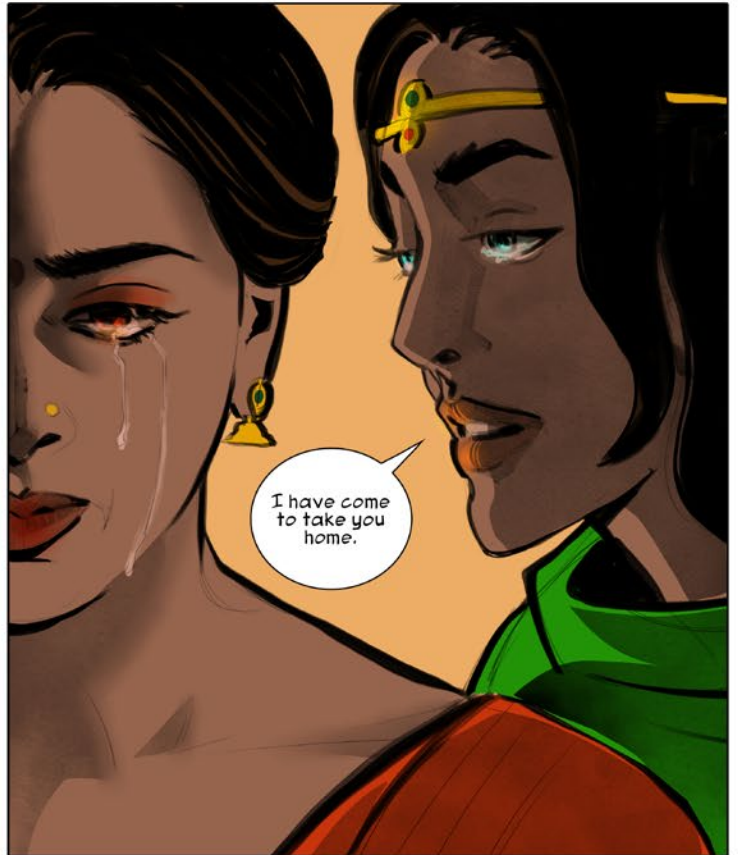
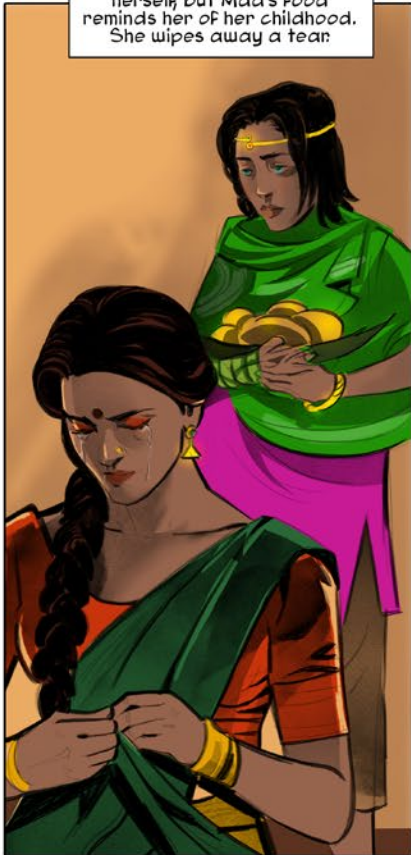
You made a good choice by coming here. Rahu will keep you safe.



Truth is, you must let men protect you. Rahu protects us.

That was your own fault! If you go out alone in tight clothes, what will happen?

Lakshmi tries to control herself, but Maa's Food reminds her of her childhood. She wipes away a tear.



I have come to take you home.





Let's discuss this later. Let's leave before someone sees us.

Lakshmi! This is a very bad place.

I am not going anywhere.



I saw what happened to you when you came home after you were abused. Here no one thinks badly of me.



She is not my sister. She keeps saying that, so I wanted to set her straight.

I see! Laila, you know this little bird after all. What a pretty sister you have.







Sahas, run!
We will come
back for
Lakshmi!



Priya is still dizzy and weak from the elixir. She grabs hold of Sahas as he carries her away.



Priya and Sahas escape into the dark forest.



It looks like she poisoned you, and your wound has not healed yet.

Manidhari notices the bandage on Priya's hand and her dizzy state.



These will help in healing Rahu's wound.

Why are you helping me?



Manidhari wraps the blue leaves around Priya's hand. The wound starts to heal instantaneously.



I need your help getting my kingdom back from Rahu.

Your kingdom?



Eons ago, I was the rightful queen of this land.



It was a beautiful land where Naagas, half-snake, half-human creatures lived.



My husband Paatal and I were the rightful rulers of this place. We loved our people and ruled our kingdom without any conflicts.



I am a castaway from the world above, called Pharti. I am an innocent being. Help me!

He is in pain. Our Pharma says to help him.

One day, a stranger called Rahu came to our court. Paatal was hesitant to help, but I insisted.



Paatal, you are a mighty king. I don't understand why you let a weak woman run your kingdom.

A kingdom can only be a man's.

It is her kingdom.



Rahu was a monster. He possessed an elixir which could take control of creatures and turn them into his disciples.



Take control of your woman and your kingdom.

He took control of Paatal's mind and turned him against me and all Female Naagas.



Soon all my female council members were removed, and only male Naagas remained!



He then locked me in my room and passed a law that male Naagas would own Female Naagas.



And then he brutally killed Paatal with his lava.



Rahu betrayed everyone and spewed his volcanic poison over my council members and my kingdom, changing it to what it is now.





I ran away to save my life. You are the one who can defeat Rahu.

I'll burn alive if I even come close to him.



Rahu is the evil energy of greed, jealousy, and lust. That can only be defeated with the pure energy of courage, kindness, and love.

But how?



He keeps his elixir in the center of the volcano. You will have to freeze it with your divine blood.



Priya takes a deep breath and climbs on Sahas. He leaps towards the volcano.

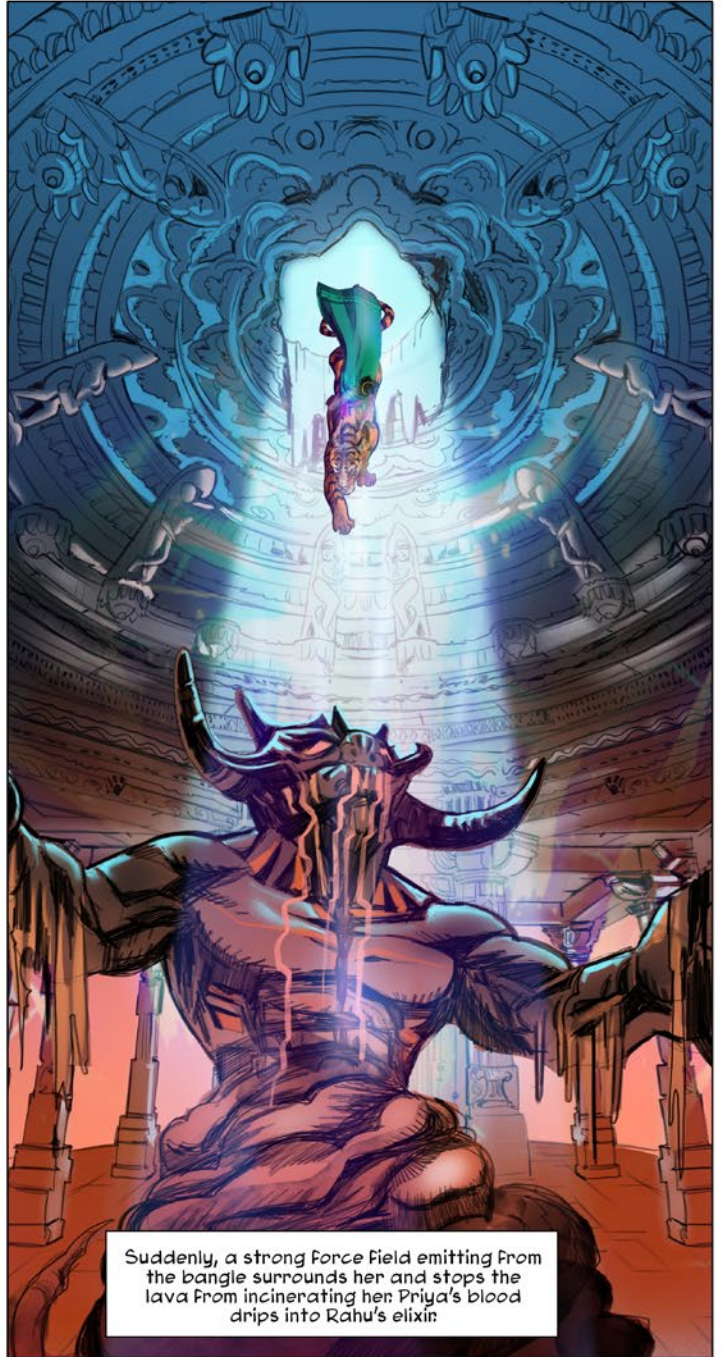
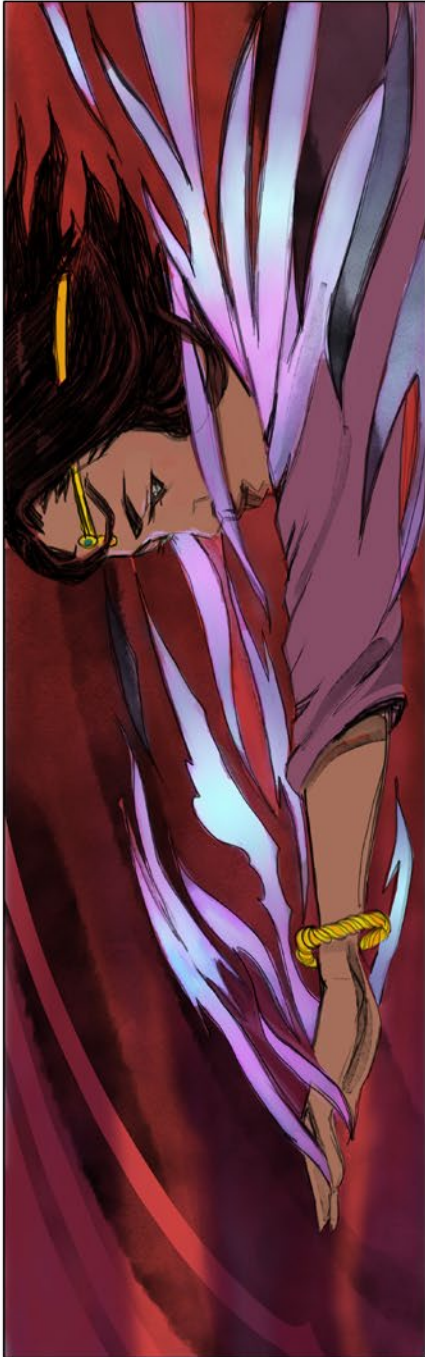


I must do this for Lakshmi.

She takes a knife in her hand and presses the bangle to her heart.



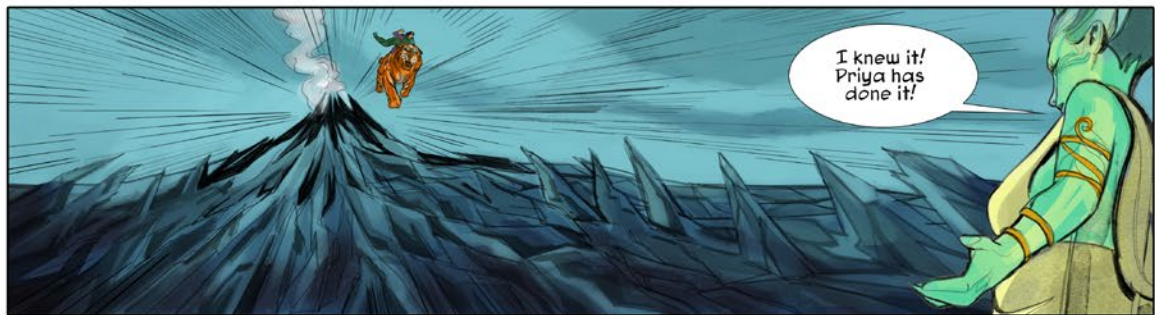
Priya cuts her hand. Blood starts to trickle. She presses the bangle tight to her heart and jumps inside without fear.



Suddenly, a strong force field emitting from the bangle surrounds her and stops the lava from incinerating her. Priya's blood drips into Rahu's elixir.



Priya's blood turns Rahu's lava into stone. She neutralizes his elixir and the fire around her ceases.



I knew it!
Priya has
done it!



In the city, lava stops
flowing and turns into rock.



Priya, at the brink of death,
is brought by Sahas to the
center of the city.



Oh, Priya.
I lost you
once. Please
don't leave
me again!

Rahu no longer has
power over Lakshmi.
She holds Priya
tightly and cries.



We are
together again
and that is
what matters.

I am sorry,
Priya. I don't
know what
came over me.



World will not accept you. There is no hope for you out there.



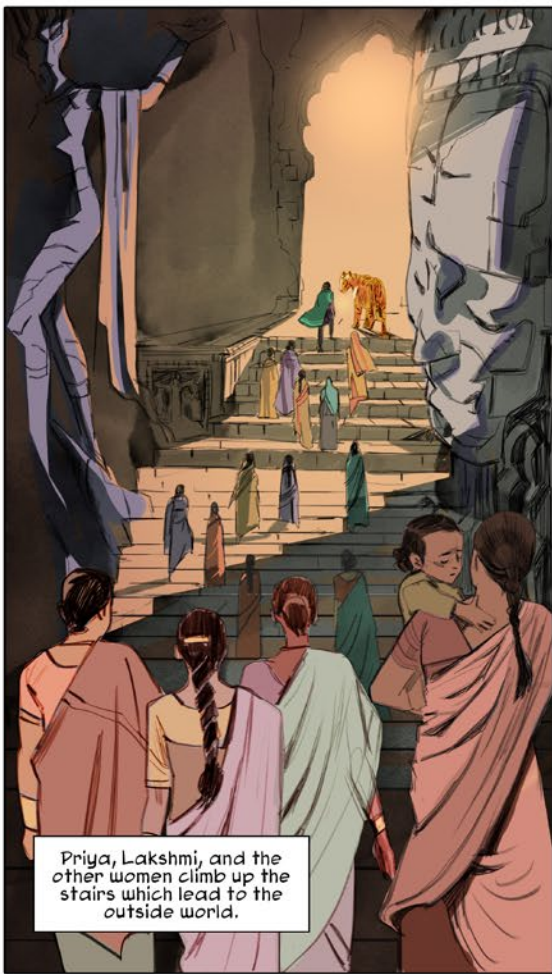
You can't control them anymore.

Manidhari commands her Female Nagaas to banish Amrit to the dungeon.



I am scared, Priya.

I am here now. You will be okay.

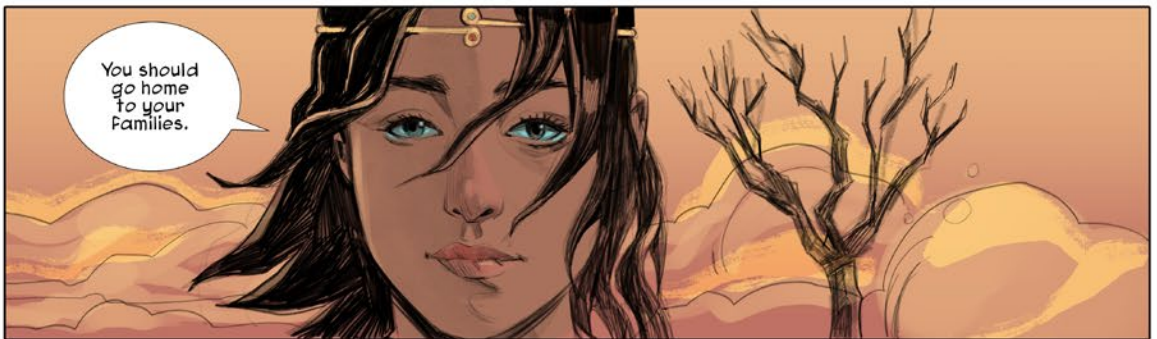


Priya, Lakshmi, and the other women climb up the stairs which lead to the outside world.



Remember you are Shakti. You are powerful.

We are going with you.



You should go home to your families.



It's true. They will burn us alive.

It will be hard, but they will take you back.

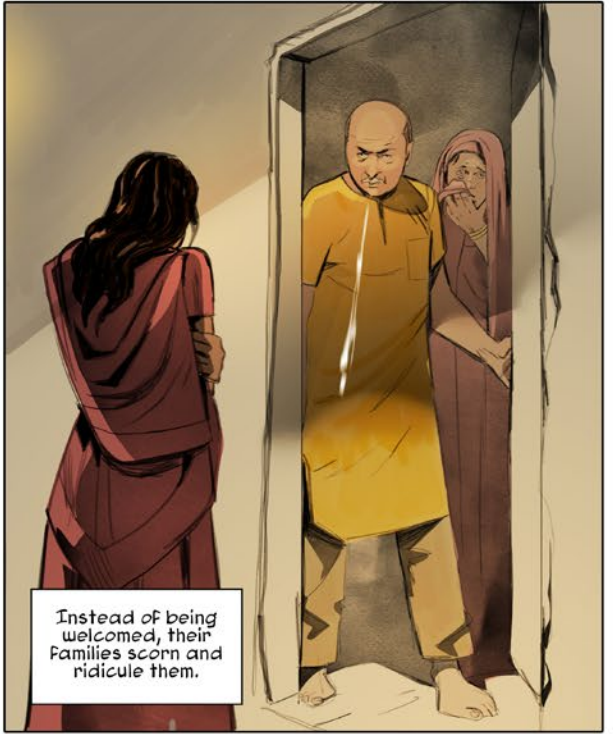
I will go with you to your villages to keep you safe. Let's go.

You speak of Fairy tales.

They won't accept us!



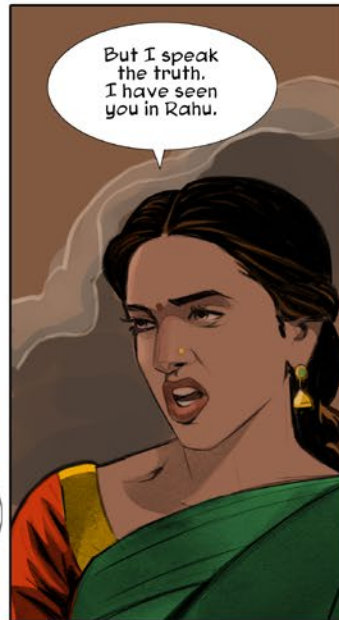
Priya leads the women through their villages. Instead of being greeted with open arms, they are treated like lepers.



Instead of being welcomed, their families scorn and ridicule them.



Some people even curse at them and shame them.









Priya's roar makes everyone Freeze!



Slowly each woman who escaped From Rahu jumps into Priya's heart. She gets bigger and stronger:





Enough!
You throw
us in harm's
way and
say it is our
Fault.



Will you let your
daughter die?



You protect your own
daughter, but don't
feel another mother's
pain?! You are blind to
your husband's flaws.



What hope do we
have when our own
mothers don't
stand with us?

But they
sinned.
A woman must
know her
boundaries.



Our sins?
We must die
because they took
our honor? No!
It is not our honor
but their honor,
that is gone.



You gave him life.
You give him power. You
need to teach him how to
respect women.

Instead
you stand
there and
throw stones
at us!

