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The Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy

Brahmani, a One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show

The Chronicles of Kalki

Shiv

A collection by

ADITI BRENNAN KAPIL

Dramatic Publishing Company

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“The Displaced Hindu Gods Trilogy was originally commissioned and produced by Mixed Blood Theatre Company, Minneapolis.

Brahman/i was developed at The Playwrights’ Center, Minneapolis, and Bay Area Playwrights Festival, San Francisco, in 2012; La Jolla Playhouse DNA Series, San Diego, 2013.

The Chronicles of Kalki was developed at The Lark, New York City, 2011.

Shiv was developed at The Playwrights’ Center, Minneapolis, 2010.”

The Chronicles of Kalki

The Chronicles of Kalki was developed at The Lark (New York City) in 2011 while originally commissioned and later produced by Mixed Blood Theatre Company in Minneapolis from Oct. 5-27, 2013.

CAST:

Kalki..... Lipica Shah
Girl 1 Cat Brindisi
Girl 2 Joetta Wright
Cop..... Andrew Guilarte

PRODUCTION:

Director Bruce A. Young
Stage Manager Raúl Ramos
Scenic Designer Nayna Ramey
Lighting Designer Karin Olson
Sound Designer Katharine Horowitz
Costume Designer Kathy Kohl
Props Designer Lois Rhomberg
Dramaturg Liz Engelman

The Chronicles of Kalki

CHARACTERS

KALKI: About 15. South Asian female. Possibly the final avatar of the god Vishnu.

GIRL 1: About 15.

GIRL 2: About 15.

COP: A police detective. Not white.

Note: The girls are not pretty, not overly clever, not “cool.” They live outside the accepted social spheres of high-school society, and casting should support that.

The Chronicles of Kalki

SCENE 1

(An interview room. GIRL 1 and COP.)

GIRL 1. So this maya ... this dream, yeah? ... colors like a graphic novel, the black and white grayscale and the bright pops ... Not like pink manga and that shit, more classic V with a shot of Marvel, but only some of the characters got the Marvel brights, the rest are all black and white unless they're bleeding. And then there's red.

So I'm in this dream and I'm running fast as hell, running from the mad dogs or whatever, that's the feeling I've got, I can't actually see dogs, I'm just running, and then I sense this electric something ... and I know ... Something ... like Alice in Wonderland, how she knew Something ... and I'm like biggering and biggering in the landscape of my mind ... and that's when I find the zipper.

The zipper. It's been hiding there like a secret key hanging from a chain. My whole damn life it's been there and I've never known.

And I think ... THAT's why my mom never let me cut my hair! Your hair's so pretty baby, 100 strokes like a princess ... she dropped it like a curtain over my zipper. So I'd never find it.

So now I know ... my whole life this zipper's been there but I never found it till this moment.

In my dream.

It was right here.

(She points to the nape of her neck.)

See that? Right there. A zipper.

Tucked in under the skin, right? But unmistakable, I mean you know how you feel around for a zipper? You know when you find it, right?

So I pick at it, I pick it out from under that, you know, flap of skin, and I'm like what the hell?

Where's this go?

It's like you find a secret door, do you open it or leave it the damn shit alone?

Right?

So I pull at it, just a little ... careful, right?

And it starts to unzip.

My skin's falling to the sides ... no pain ... no blood ... just freedom, like I can breathe ... finally breathe ... so I keep pulling at it, sliding it down ... down my skin, my flesh slipping off like it was just waiting to be shed, and I'm wondering how far does this thing go, you know?

And I'm taking off everything, bony nose, small breasts, hairy legs, itchy skin ...

and I feel free...

and I feel beautiful ...

because inside every one of us...

is a Barbie doll.

Blonde, realistic features, C-cups up here, no pesky genitalia down there, standard-sized to fit all Barbie accessories sold separately in fashionable colors, complete with enviable lifestyles for the bargain price of \$9.99.

COP. Wow.

GIRL 1. Yeah.

COP. OK. So ...

Does this story in any way relate back to your friend who is missing?

Or the boy she allegedly assaulted prior to her disappearance?

GIRL 1. Oh shit.

COP. No?

GIRL 1. Right. Sorry, yeah ...

Um ... right, yeah. Could you repeat the question?

COP. It was a pretty open question.

GIRL 1. Yeah, I'm really sorry, I just got so distracted by ...

COP. What?

GIRL 1. Your plight. As a person of color. I just want you to know that I get it. Must suck being you.

COP. Would you be more comfortable with a white detective?

GIRL 1. Well yeah, who wouldn't?

COP. It's not an option.

GIRL 1. You sure? Check for a zipper. C'mon, check for a zipper, just a quick feel ...

(Pause.)

COP. What can you tell me about your friend Kalki?

(Silence.)

COP (*cont'd*). Do you know her whereabouts?

(Nothing.)

COP (*cont'd*). When did you last see her?

(Still nothing.)

COP (*cont'd*). If she's your friend you want to help us.

(No.)

COP *(cont'd)*. OK. When did you first meet her? At school?
Through a friend?

(Long silence.)

GIRL 1. Can we be done?

COP. No

GIRL 1. Why do you care? I mean come on, she's probably
just visiting someone or something.

COP. I care because a girl is missing.

GIRL 1. Yeah, but look around, she ain't missing much.

COP. Ha.

(Pause.)

GIRL 1. Look, I barely knew her. She transferred like last
week, showed up in the middle of world religions like last
... I don't know, Wednesday or something.

So that's it. I really don't know her.

COP. OK. Tell me about Wednesday.

GIRL 1. Tell you what? It's a day. God created the fish or
something. It was Wednesday, we had world religions with
Mr. Brooks.

COP. Good. So anything interesting happen earlier that day?
Before class?

GIRL 1. Gaaaaawwhhd! What is with you? It's not like it's
some murder mystery, she probably just transferred back to
... wherever ... what is the big deal?

COP. That's entirely possible, likely even, and the sooner you
help me confirm that, the sooner we'll be done.

I don't suppose you've remembered her last name?

GIRL 1. No. I barely knew her.

COP. All right, well. Let's keep going. Tell me about before class.

GIRL 1. Nothing happened before class. I don't even know what you're asking, I mean the world revolved on its axis, and shit happened before class, but nothing happened before class, it was just a boring Wednesday!

The C-Cups were all huddled by the door pawing all over their boyfriends, so I had to stand there and wait for them to finish whatever the hell they were doing to get in the damn room, that happened.

COP. C-Cups?

GIRL 1. They're the girl crew, they're all pretty and they have boobs out to here.

COP. C-Cups, I see.

GIRL 1. Yeah, well, they're not all real. The boobs. This one girl, her mom took her shopping, and the next day, BAM! Miracle C-Cups!

COP. OK ...

GIRL 1. What? You said you wanted details.

COP. OK, then what?

GIRL 1. Class started.

Mr. Brooks is like blasting through Asian religions, he's got a day for each continent so he has a lot to cover. I don't know, it's class, you want a blow by blow?

COP. Sure.

GIRL 1. OK, well, at one point he gets to Hinduism, and he like really wants everyone to get excited about it, like instead of droning on, he's like looking at us and wants us to participate cuz this is like the fun one. He's all, what do you think? Don't be shy! And like no one moves, right? So then he picks on me, and he's like, "Would you like to share

some thoughts?” And I’m like ... “No.” And everyone kind of laughs, so that’s cool.

And Mr. Brooks is all, “Come on now, this is a participatory class, share some thoughts, get us started!” So I stand up, and I’m like—

I don’t know, I was all jittery cuz everyone was looking, and I was like tying my sweater around my middle cuz ... I don’t know, I hate my middle ... and I’m like,

“Um, I don’t know, Mr. Brooks,”

and he’s like grinning at me like I’m being all good, and my skin is hot, cuz I know they’re all watching me, and I’m like,

“I’m kind of an atheist, and I don’t really believe in religion.

I mean ancient people were pretty ignorant, they needed religion to deal with their own lives, but we really don’t anymore. So um, there you go.”

And his face went all *whaaaa!*, and we were all kind of hooting and laughing at him ...

COP. OK.

GIRL 1. And then one of the C-Cups gets up and is all like “That’s disrespectful,” and how I’m free to think what I want but that that makes me ignorant, blah blah ...

Which I thought was stupid cuz her crew were totally laughing when I said it ...

And everyone’s like smirking at me ... whatever ... And then Mr. Brooks steps in like I need backup or something, like he’s telling everyone to pipe down and he says something about Voltaire, and how I was bringing up a good point about the enlightenment, and how Voltaire said if God did not exist humans would have invented him.

And then he goes back to Hinduism and starts talking

about like avatars, and the guys are all like, “Awright!” and I’m like, this is so not what you think it is. I mean, a turtle avatar? Who the hell picks a turtle for an avatar? And while we’re at it, why the hell is that Vishnu dude blue?

COP. Can’t say.

GIRL 1. Yeah. But I mean, he’s cool I guess. Avatars.

(Beat.)

GIRL 1 *(cont’d)*. Yeah, so I don’t know, I was just sitting there while Mr. Brooks droned on, and my friend is like—

(Unseen by COP, GIRL 2 pulls up a chair next to GIRL 1.)

GIRL 2. You’re so dumb, why’d you even talk?

GIRL 1 *(to COP)*. So I’m pissed at her. She’s all trying to get in with the popular girls this year, and like a month ago she was like, “You have to get cool or we can’t be friends anymore,” which is stupid cuz it’s not like anyone else wants to hang with her.

And I’m sick of this fucking classroom, like it’s making me sweat, and I feel like I got my period or maybe I have to pee, but either way I need to get to the bathroom like fast, so I’m seriously thinking about making a break for it, like all the way, like on a bus and out of town ...

(This is truth. At that moment she thought about running away. But then—)

So I wasn’t really paying attention, you know?

COP. Paying attention to what?

GIRL 1. To Kalki. When she showed up. She was just there all of a sudden.

(KALKI pulls up a chair behind GIRL 1 and GIRL 2. She’s wet. Lights out on COP. The girls are in class—Flashback.)

KALKI. Damn skin.

(GIRLS 1 and 2 are startled.)

GIRL 1. Where the fuck—?

GIRL 2. Who are you?

KALKI. Semi-porous, semi-hairy, semi-insulating, bullshit.
What'd I miss?

GIRL 1. Watch the spray, what the hell?

KALKI. Wait, he moved on to Buddhism already? He did all the avatars?

GIRL 1. Who are you?

GIRL 2. Yeah you should look up the avatars, that's exactly the kind of bullshit he'll quiz us on, and there are like nine.

KALKI. Ten primary.

GIRL 1. That's if you think the last one has come and gone already, and I don't see all evil vanquished so much, so we're still waiting on number ten.

GIRL 2. Totally gonna be the trick question.

GIRL 1. So predictable.

KALKI. Is there a single fucking Hindu in this class? What the hell am I doing here?

GIRL 1. What?

KALKI. Nothing. So you two are tight, huh?

GIRL 2. Whatever, I'm only sitting here cuz we're not allowed to change seats mid-semester.

GIRL 1. Hell, I don't care if you move.

KALKI. So how do you know when the final avatar gets here?

GIRL 1. All evil is vanquished. Pay attention.

GIRL 2. Yeah, plus he'll be riding a white stallion, so that'll make him pretty easy to spot.

KALKI. Handy. Well this is fascinating so far. Glad I caught the tail end of class. Didn't realize my Hindu window was so brief.

GIRL 1. Why? You practicing?

KALKI. Practicing what?

GIRL 1. Like. Religion.

KALKI. Hell no. I'm a professional.

(Mr. Brooks drones. KALKI listens—)

Oh, Buddha, Buddha, Buddha ... eat something. You know he was just another avatar, right? Until he decided to make a break for it.

GIRL 1 *(to herself)*. I need to go to the bathroom.

GIRL 2. You a transfer?

KALKI. Yeah.

GIRL 2. Where from?

KALKI. Sprang full grown from a furrow in the athletic field out back.

I mean I'm just objecting to Buddha getting coverage in the Hindu section and then getting his own section, on principal, you know?

Technically, Jesus was an avatar too.

I know it sounds like I'm taking credit for everything, but if I don't toot my own horn, who's gonna?

(GIRLS 1 and 2 stare at her.)

KALKI *(cont'd)*. It's raining.

GIRL 2. What?

KALKI. Have you noticed that it's raining?

GIRL 2. Of course we've noticed it's raining. What the hell does that have to do with anything?

KALKI. The athletic field. It's wet. Mud. Perfect conditions.

GIRL 1. For what, planting football players?

KALKI. A furrow of mud and dirt and clay, churning from the onslaught of rain ...

little bits and pieces of life scurrying for cover ... ants stunned by raindrops, worms bloating upward ... seeds and weeds ripping and scattering ...

Perfect conditions.

GIRL 1. What?

KALKI. I mean the results speak for themselves, right? I look good.

(School bell rings.)

KALKI (*cont'd*). Taoism got robbed—

(GIRL 1 exits, she needs to get to the bathroom fast. KALKI exits, leaving GIRL 2 and COP. Back in the present.)

SCENE 2

(Interrogation of GIRL 2.)

GIRL 2. Is this about the shoplifting?

COP. Shoplifting?

GIRL 2. Yes. I'll take the plea.

COP. I'll notify the DA.

GIRL 2. *(I)* so don't know what I'm doing here.

COP. Just helping me get the picture. That's all. Just paint me a picture, a series of events.

GIRL 2. I don't know.

COP. Just anything you remember. Anything about Kalki that would help me understand her, where she might go, that sort of thing.

GIRL 2. I mean are you here about her, or about that guy who was attacked or whatever? Because I don't know what exactly you're questioning me about.

COP. My primary concern is for the safety of your friend, a missing minor takes precedence over the assault on your classmate. Though if you have any information on that, I'm happy to listen.

GIRL 2. Because I think my parents are overreacting, Kalki's fine. She's badass. Unbreakable.

COP. All right well, as soon as I can confirm that ... Can you tell me where she is?

GIRL 2. I don't know where she is.

COP. Then I have to keep looking. And asking questions. You understand.

GIRL 2. I shouldn't even have told them about her.

COP. Your parents? Why did you? Maybe because you were concerned for her safety?

GIRL 2. No. I just.

She was important to me. She was like ... the most amazing person that ever ... happened to me.

I guess I just wanted to share her.

My parents and me, we're close.

And we don't usually hide things from each other, so I just.

COP. So you feel like you were close with her. Even though you only knew her for about a week?

GIRL 2. Yeah. Yeah.

I mean she was ... amazing.

Like really gorgeous, in like a not pretty way, like in all the wrong ways, but ... and I really liked her ... like maybe loved ... a bit.

I don't know. I liked her.

COP. And the three of you spent a lot of time together?