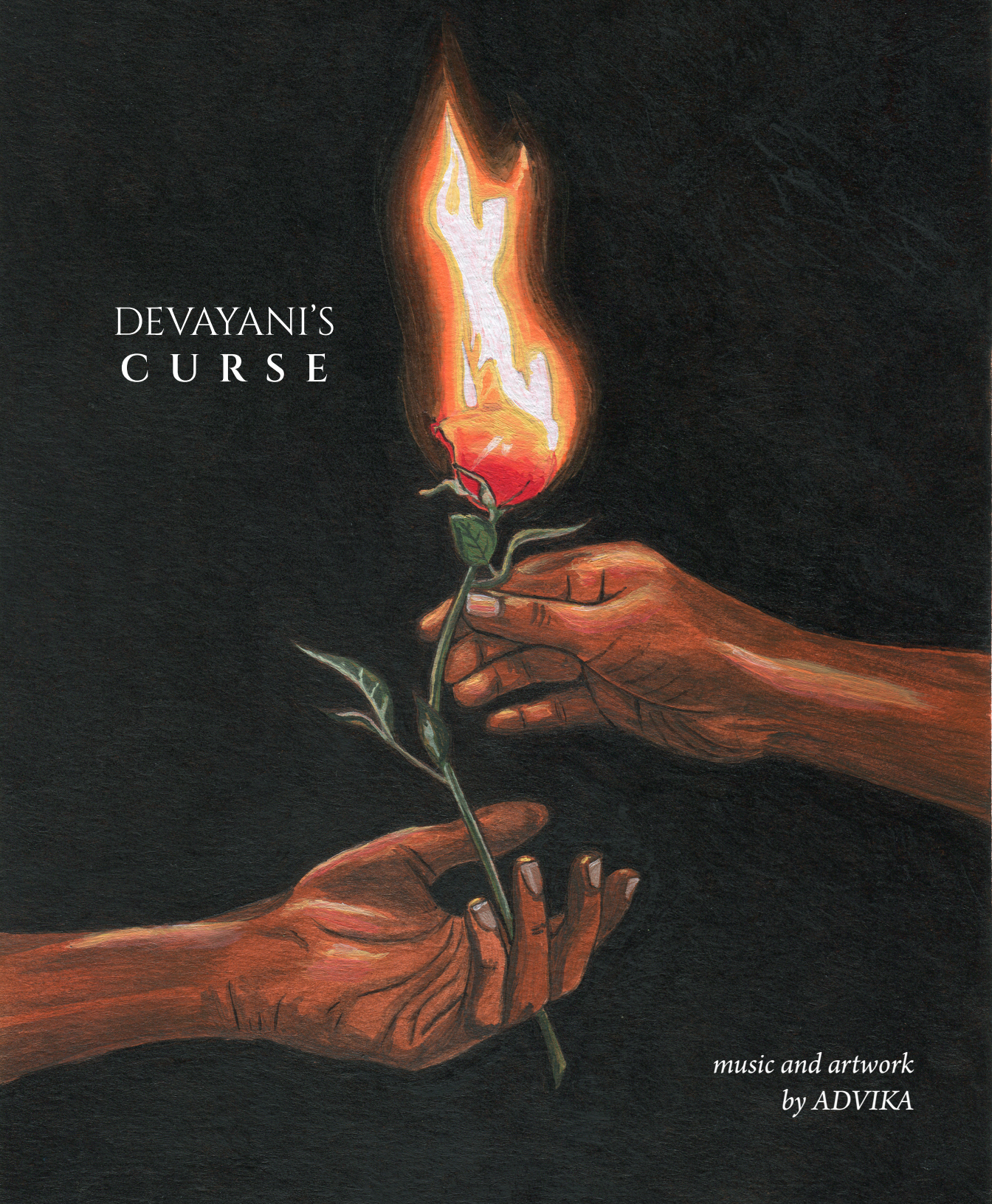

DEVAYANI'S
CURSE
music and artwork
by ADVIKA

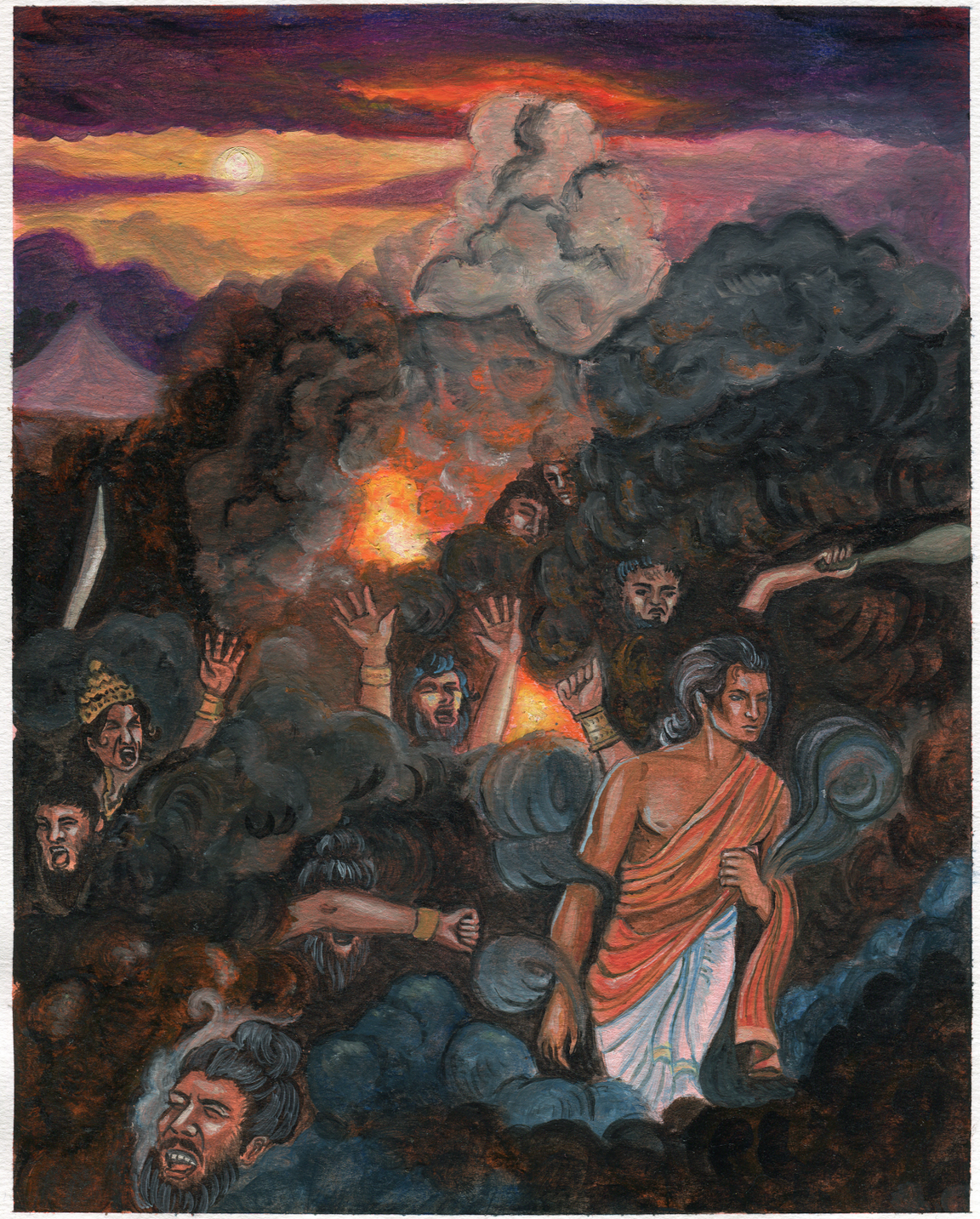
I.

A long time ago, the Devas (the gods) and the Asuras (the demons) fought for dominion over the three worlds, in a war that lasted hundreds of years.

The Devas and the Asuras both had gurus (spiritual guides) on their sides. Brihaspati, the guru of the Devas, and Shukracharya, the guru of the Asuras, both were equally knowledgeable and powerful. Shukra, however, possessed a power that Brihaspati did not—the ability to resurrect the dead.

Whenever the Devas defeated the Asuras in battle, Shukra would simply revive the lost Asura soldiers, rendering the Devas helpless in the fight. Desperate to gain an advantage, the Devas called upon Brihaspati's son, a handsome and intelligent young man named Kacha, to convince the Asura guru Shukra to take him on as a student. They schemed that if Kacha used his charms to seduce Shukra's beloved daughter, Devayani, he may gain his trust and learn the secret art of resurrection.

Kacha set off on his mission, vowing to stay loyal to his cause no matter the cost.



II.

As Kacha carried out his studies with Shukra, he began to ingratiate himself with the guru's beautiful daughter, Devayani. Day by day, he accompanied her on walks through the forest, serenaded her with his lilting melodies, and tenderly fulfilled her every wish. Over time, Devayani began to fall deeply in love with Kacha.



III.

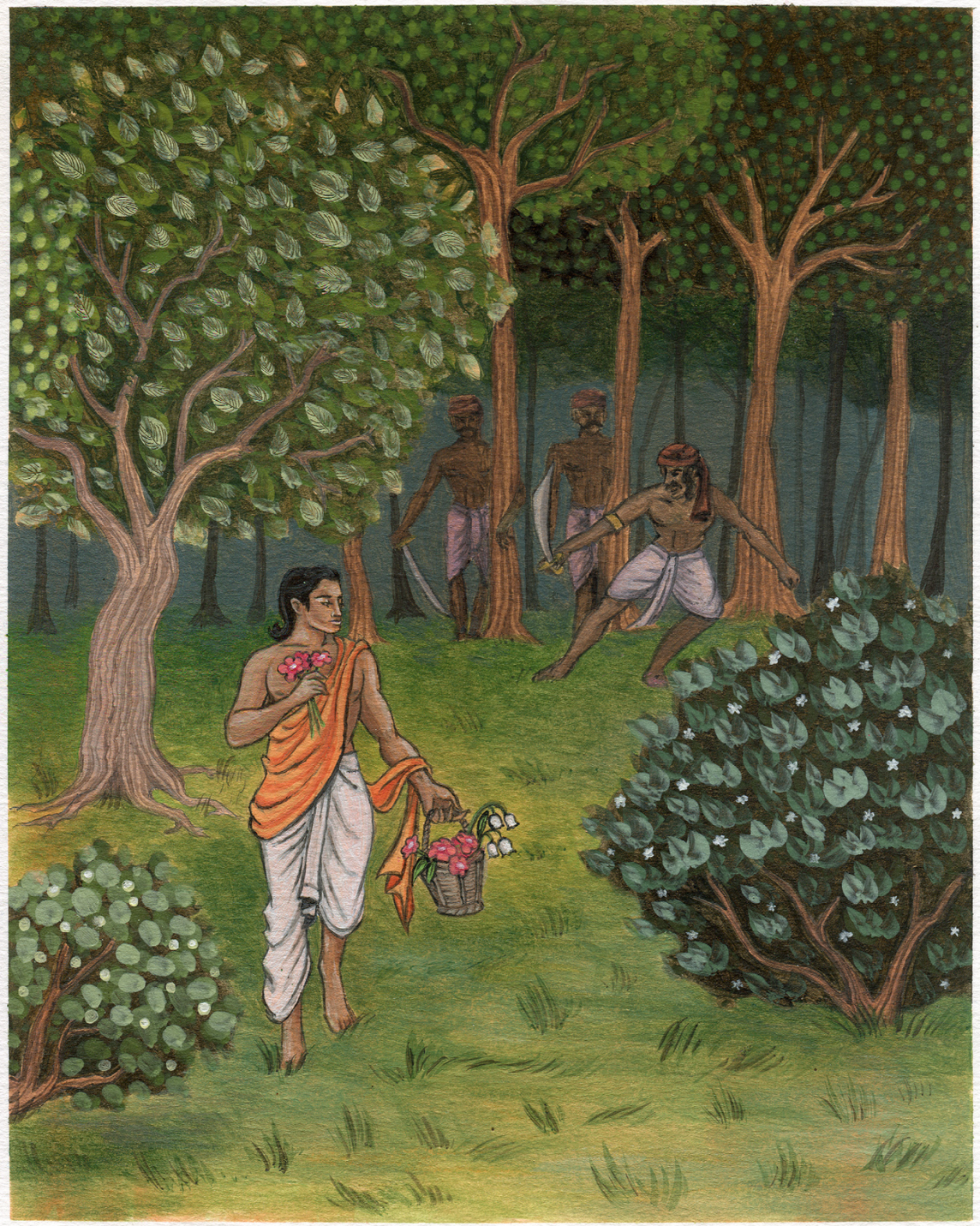
Over time, the Asuras became suspicious of Kacha's intentions, and deduced his plan to attain the coveted knowledge of resurrection. One day, Kacha took Devayani's cattle out to the forest to graze. Once he was alone, the Asuras ambushed him—they killed him, cut him to pieces, and fed his flesh to their dogs.

Devayani grew concerned when the cattle returned to the house without him. Convinced that something happened to him, she cried to her father and begged him to resurrect him. Responding to her pleas, Shukra brought Kacha back to life.

On another day, Devayani asked Kacha to bring her some flowers she had seen deep in the forest. Eager to appease her, he went back into the woods. The Asuras, who had been waiting, slew him once again, pounded his body into a paste, and dissolved him into the ocean, confident that this time he could not be revived.

Yet again, when Devayani grew worried when her lover did not return, she begged her father to revive him. The Asuras' frustrations grew as they realized that the guru Shukra, oblivious to Kacha's true intentions, would continue to revive him every time they killed him.

At last, they came up with a solution. They would kill Kacha, cremate his body, and dissolve his ashes into a wine that they would then serve to Shukra. Their plan succeeded, and Shukra drank the wine without question. When Devayani realized that Kacha was nowhere to be found, she despaired. She implored her father to bring Kacha back, but this time he declined her request. He reasoned that resurrecting Kacha would be futile, as the Asuras would only kill him again.



IV.

Devayani fell into a deep depression, refusing to eat or speak to anyone. Shukracharya, pained by his daughter's condition, relented. As usual, he began the resurrection mantra, but this time Kacha did not appear. Instead, his voice called out from inside Shukra's stomach. Shukra explained that if he were to fully revive his student, he would not survive the process. Devastated, Devayani insisted that if she were to lose either Kacha or her father, she would lose her will to live.



V.

As Shukra pondered this dilemma, he discerned Kacha's true intentions. In defeat, he realized the only way to save Kacha would be to teach him the art of resurrection through his stomach—Shukra would then revive Kacha, who would bring his guru back to life. Kacha emerged unharmed, and revived Shukra as promised.

When the time came for Kacha to return home, he went to find Devayani. She expected that since his studies were over, they could be united in marriage. Instead, he rejected her and revealed the truth of why he came. Devayani insisted that their love was stronger than the war, but he remained resolute in his decision to leave. The manipulation and betrayal dawned on Devayani, as she realized that she had been no more than a mere instrument in his mission. She cursed Kacha in a fit of rage, rendering him incapable of remembering his knowledge of resurrection when he would need it the most. Kacha, unshaken, cursed her back—declaring that she would forever be alone in love, and he reminded her that even if he cannot use his power, he can still impart it to others.

Victorious, he returned to the Devas, leaving Devayani heartbroken and forgotten.



do the ends always justify the means?

is it acceptable for the innocent to be
sacrificed for the greater good?

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