

Narrator (Maya): *Greetings, everyone . I am Maya. You may not know it, but we have already met. I live in the dark corners of the hearts and minds of each and every one of you. When you feel jealous or when you doubt your abilities, I am there with you, whispering into your ear.... convincing you to do evil* (laughs)

Regardless of what you may have been told about this is my story. And I will tell it to you now (She holds up a sign that says Ramayana and erases the ``Ra`` and the ``na``. Then laughs)

Long ago in India there lived a king, Dasharatha, who had 3 beloved wives. He loved them all, and, surprisingly, they loved each other as well. In general, life was good for these 4, but the king and his queens had no children. The queens, being strong, sensible women, decided that they needed to do something.

The plan worked. The king's sword ``sharpened`` and soon `` 4 baby boys were bouncing on the king's knees. The king credited his sacrifice for this great miracle (well, they always do) but the queens knew the score. (Aside: they always do)

Anyway, the 4 boys, Rama, Lakshmana and his twin and Bharata grew into fine young men – best of friends, ``true blue`` friends as a matter of fact. (Rama appears - blue, followed by Lakshmana) They were so annoyingly goody-goody that I could never slip even a whisper of doubt or jealousy into the ears of any of them. So... I decided to just bide my time

The news of Rama's skill as an archer spread throughout the land. When the sage Vishwamitra was having troubles with wicked demons defiling his rituals, he knew just where to go for help.

OK, now we have to backtrack a little bit. Around the same time that Dasharatha's sword was being sharpened, Janaka, the king of another district, found a beautiful baby girl in his garden. He accepted this daughter with great joy and named the baby, Sita. Sita grew into a stunningly beautiful young woman, and when she was 18, the king decided to hold a contest to see who would have the honor of marrying her. Yeah, you heard that right that's how they did things in those days. By now, Rama's reputation was now so great that he was invited to participate in the contest.

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So the good news is that Sita got the man she wanted after all. Rama and Lakshmana and their brides returned to Dasharatha's kingdom and lived happily with the king and queens in the palace. After 12 years, Dasharatha had grown pretty old, and was ready to retire. He announced his intention to crown his oldest and most noble son, Rama, as his successor, just as everyone was expecting.

...and here is where I come in. I told you I had decided to bide my time, and now my opportunity presented itself. One big happy family, right?

No, There was a little hole in the wall, and I slipped in. Through one of the housemaids I was able to whisper into the ear of the youngest queen, who FINALLY became jealous that it was not her darling boy who had been chosen as the king.

And so the fun began! As it turns out, when the king was young and wooing this youngest queen he had, in a moment of passion, promised her that he would unquestioningly grant her 2 wishes whenever she so desired. And the queen decided that now was the time to cash in.

So Bharata is to be crowned the king and Rama is banished for 14 years. Lakshmana and Seeta follow Rama into the wilderness.