



Sera and the Royal Stars: Volume 1

Jon Tsuei

Audrey Mok, Illustrator

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A young woman tries to save her people with the help of magical star-beings in *Sera and the Royal Stars: Volume 1*.

After a battle against the forces of her uncle, who seeks to usurp her father's throne, Sera meets a supernatural being called Mitra. Mitra informs Sera that she's been chosen to "break the bonds placed on the eternal celestial lights," just as Sera's mother was chosen before her. Her uncle seizes the kingship, but Sera's mission takes on another, more urgent dimension: if she doesn't fulfill her obligation to Mitra, dire consequences will befall everything, and everyone, she's ever known.

Combining skywatching with fantasy adventure, the book introduces the "Royal Stars," a legendary, powerful group that existed before human-invented gods. Aldebaran, who appears as an old man, is a star in the constellation Taurus. Antares, a bright star in the constellation Scorpius, manifests as a deadly warrior. Rastaban and Eltanin, two stars in the constellation Draco, serve as villains.

The details of the Royal Stars' history are sparse, perhaps to be fully revealed in future volumes, but the mystery helps keep the story engrossing. Despite familiar elements like an evil uncle and a magical quest, Tsuei manages to keep things fresh; of note is Sera's trip to the underworld, in which she confronts her fears and meets the death gods of Egyptian, Greek, and other cultures. Mok's art is handsome, detailed but not too busy, and made vibrant by Raul Angulo's vast palette of colors.

The book sets a strong foundation, introducing a world populated by living stars that may have, in theory, a limitless number of potential characters and stories. *Sera and the Royal Stars* is an exciting swords-and-sorcery tale with an appealing lead and an original, astronomical twist.

PETER DABBENE (January / February 2020)

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