



The Epic of Chakramire: Mistress of Strife

Marcus Woods

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Concentrated on deceptions, doublespeak, and rhetorical loop-de-loops, The Epic of Chakramire is an ambitious prose poem whose characters reveal their truths in thick, captivating verses.

The evolutions of life on Earth, technology, and culture are examined in Marcus Woods's dramatic prose poem, *The Epic of Chakramire*.

Seventy million years in the future, a mysterious emissary, Chakramire, and her android bard and personal scribe, Mara Mara, travel to Earth from the colony of Mars Dominion via the Trans-Neptunian dwarf planet Eris. Their destination is a remote South Atlantic island, Sitnalta—the new cultural cradle of Earth. On a surreptitious expedition, they are joined by the Egress Machine, a handheld companion technology that, contrary to Mara Mara, was designed to hasten the abandonment of forgotten and lost knowledge.

Diverse beings throughout Sitnalta query and gossip about Chakramire's alien presence. The Ternion, a triumvirate of three Devas (forged from an algorithm as a collective human consciousness) and their human conduits, stands out among these antagonists to Chakramire's mission. The Ternion dispatch a mercenary, Doryline, to obliterate Chakramire's influence in reviving human identity.

Mara Mara is the advanced narrator through whom the story of Chakramire's travels and motives is filtered. The drama escalates from all over Sitnalta as Chakramire and Mara Mara travel its eastern settlements. They seek the inventor of the Egress Machine, which Chakramire suspects has begun to malfunction and offer predictions of the future. The inventor, Ray, is mired in a love affair with Xara; both align to different Devas. And Ray's own epic fuels Chakramire's work to eliminate Earth's people's dogmatic automaticity.

Broken into three parts containing multiple cantos, the book's sections splice and weave together like a deck of shuffled cards. Concentrated on deceptions, doublespeak, and rhetorical loop-de-loops, the characters reveal their truths through thick pentameters and obstacles of poetic verse that complement their innate obfuscations. Questions are posed in complex syntax—regarding the role of technology in human life; regarding genetic differences between humans living on other planets and Earth-bound people.

The imagery is often beautiful, and the book's evocations are piquing: Sitnalta is a semordnilap for *Atlantis*, giving the setting the distinct patina of a thriving, if misguided, civilization on the brink of catastrophe. Still, the verse is often dizzying, moving through exhaustive worldbuilding with its own complicated style: For example, Earth and its various dominions and leaders are referred to by up to five different names each. The marrow of the story, however, rescues the book from the realm of the esoteric.

The Epic of Chakramire is a challenging speculative prose poem about Earth's future and scattered progeny.

RYAN PRADO (December 11, 2024)

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