

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S

DEV

YUDH



ISSUE 9

BASU / PATEL

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S
DEVI

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Story so far...

The future of the world is decided tonight.

Lord Bala, no longer willing to tolerate the constant failures of his acolytes and employees, journeys to the Pashupatinagar slum to fulfill his quest. His objective: to find the Source, the vessel in which the power of untold millennia of human prayer is trapped. With the Source, Bala will become the most powerful being in the universe, and the Gods will fall. Tara Mehta, the Devi incarnate, is beginning to come to terms with the Goddess trapped inside her body. She's rescued inspector Rahul Singh, her sole friend and ally, from the clutches of the blade-demon Falchion, and now must rescue the slum from the ravaging Darinde.

The Durapasya, led by High-Counselor Agantuk, battle the Darinde for control of the temple in the heart of the slum. Also in Pashupatinagar, fighting for their lives, are Iyam, once Bala's favorite General, and Kratha, the Apsara assassin--who's recently been told by Lord Bala that her fee for assassinating the Devi is forfeit.



Part Nine
Yuddh



HELP US, LORD IYAM!

HOLD OUT. I WILL RETURN SOON. LORD BALA'S WORK HAS TO COME FIRST.



THERE ARE TOO MANY!

FORGET THE PERIMETER! SIEZE THE TEMPLE!



YOU'RE KILLING THE SLUM-DWELLERS!

IT CAN'T BE HELPED, AGANTUK.



FOR THE GODS!



YOU'RE NEEDED OUTSIDE!

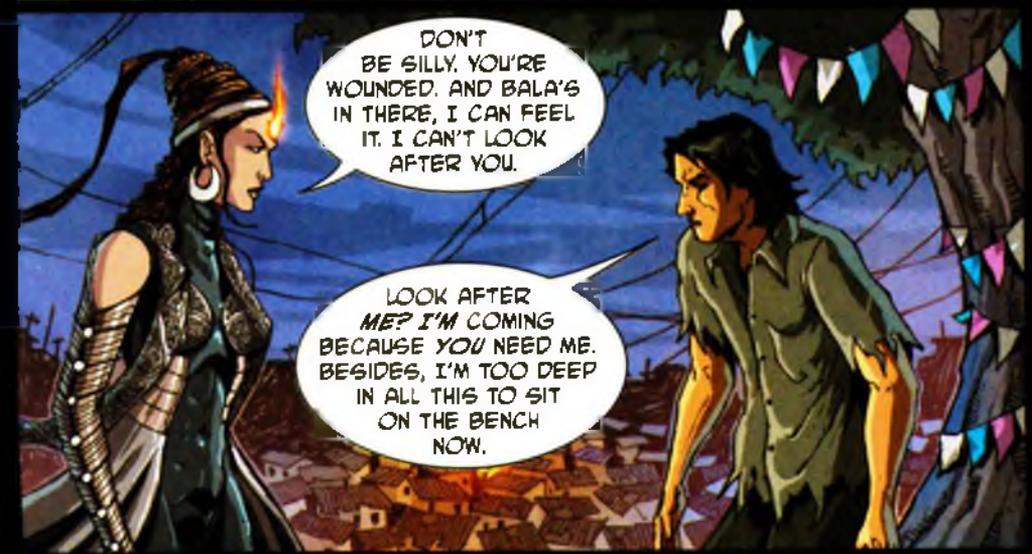


SO BE IT. CLOSE RANKS. WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL.



STAY HERE. I'LL BE BACK SOON.

OH, NO YOU DON'T. I'M COMING TOO.



DON'T BE SILLY. YOU'RE WOUNDED. AND BALA'S IN THERE, I CAN FEEL IT. I CAN'T LOOK AFTER YOU.

LOOK AFTER ME? I'M COMING BECAUSE YOU NEED ME. BESIDES, I'M TOO DEEP IN ALL THIS TO SIT ON THE BENCH NOW.



I THINK I CAN DO WITHOUT GUARDS, RAHUL. MAYBE YOU MISSED THE LITTLE DISPLAY WITH THE BLADE-DEMON, BUT I'M A BIG GIRL NOW. AND I'LL GET IT DONE FASTER ON MY OWN.

THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED, ISN'T IT?



NOT WITHOUT ME.

I'M SORRY, RAHUL. I'M BEING CALLED FROM INSIDE THE SLUM.

LET'S NOT WASTE TIME ARGUING, THEN.

I'M GOING ALONE.













LORD BALA!
THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED
HONOR. SURELY OUR
DEFENSE CANNOT
FAIL NOW!

QUIET.
ABANDON YOUR
POSTS.

BUT...



IS THERE
ANYONE HERE CAPABLE
OF OBEYING SIMPLE
INSTRUCTIONS?



YES, LORD.

I WANT THIS TEMPLE STRIPPED TO ITS
BARE BONES. EVERY SHRINE, EVERY
STATUE, EVERY PASSAGE. I SEEK
A HIDDEN CHAMBER OR PASSAGE.
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?

SIRE...
WHAT OF
THE--



DURAPAS--



HMM.

ANY FURTHER
QUESTIONS?

I HEAR
AND OBEY,
SIRE.



STOP!

BUT DEVI, WE'RE ONLY DOING OUR DUTY.

IN PREVIOUS AGES, I WOULD NOT HAVE STOPPED YOU. THIS IS NOT, HOWEVER, A PREVIOUS AGE. FIGHT THE DARINDE ELSEWHERE. TOO MANY INNOCENT LIVES ARE AT RISK HERE.

BUT WE MUST RECLAIM THE TEMPLE.



WHY?

IF WE DO NOT CAPTURE THE TEMPLE BY TONIGHT, LORD BALA WILL POSSESS THE SOURCE.

THE SOURCE?



RETURN TO BATTLE. MY BLESSINGS ARE WITH YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, DEVI?



LISTEN TO ME CLOSELY, TARA.

THE SOURCE IS A VESSEL OF UNIMAGINABLE POWER. CONTROLLING THE SOURCE, FOR A BEING AS MIGHTY AS BALA ALREADY IS, WOULD MEAN THE STRENGTH TO OVERCOME THE PANTHEON AND ALL IT RULES.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT IF WE DON'T STOP BALA NOW, ALL IS LOST.

I KNOW YOU HATE SEEING INNOCENTS DIE, BUT UNLESS WE HELP THE DURAPASYA CAPTURE THE TEMPLE NOW, THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT ENDS TONIGHT.



I NEED YOU. ARE YOU WITH ME?

YES, BUT...



HELLO, TARA.

LORD IYAM, IT SEEMS WE'VE MET MORE INTIMATELY THAN I WAS PREVIOUSLY AWARE OF.



I MUST CONFESS I APPROVE OF THE NEW CLOTHES. I ALWAYS PREFERRED MY LOVERS A LITTLE... AGGRESSIVE.



YOU'RE AS DASHING AS EVER. THAT ALWAYS HELPED ME OVERLOOK YOUR OTHER... SHORTCOMINGS.



SHOULD WE KISS AND MAKE UP, THEN? I ALWAYS HATED HAVING TO HURT YOU.



YOU HID YOUR RELUCTANCE WELL, BUT I SEEK NO RETRIBUTION, IYAM--IN FACT, FORGIVENESS COULD BE YOURS, SHOULD YOU SEEK IT.



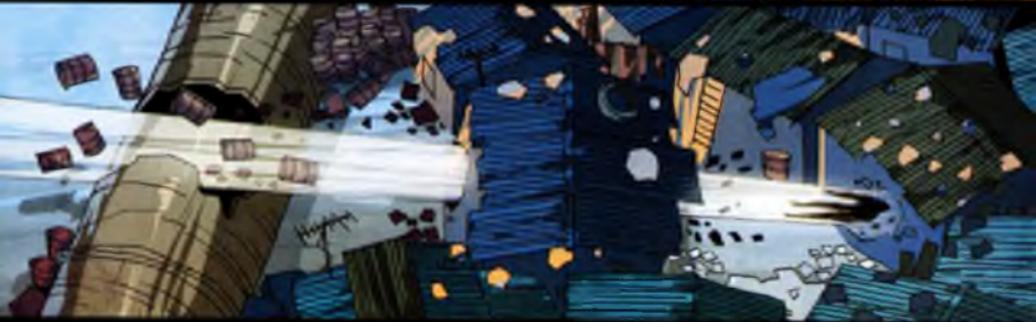
YOU EXPECT TO PERSUADE ME TO CHANGE SIDES?

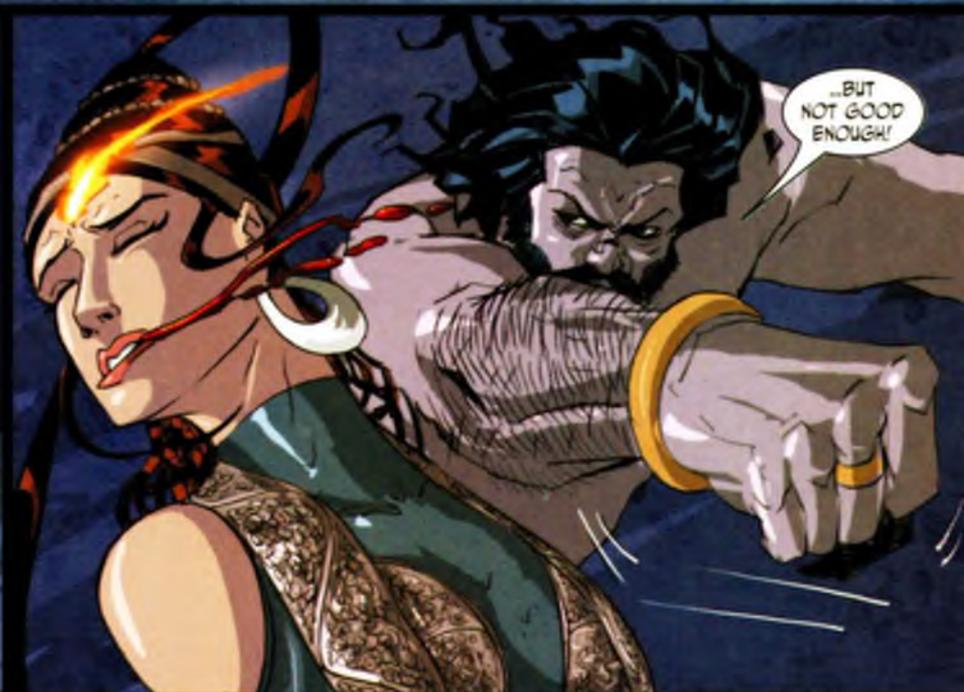
THINK OF THE BENEFITS.



I DID. BEST LAUGH I EVER HAD.









THEN KILL HER, KRATHA, IF YOU DARE SNATCH IYAM'S PREY FROM HIS JAWS.

OR COVER YOURSELF UP AND SLINK OUT OF TOWN. THIS IS NOT YOUR DAY.



BRAVE WORDS. YOUR MASTER HAS VIOLATED OUR AGREEMENT, AND AFTER KILLING HER, I WILL NEED TO GO AFTER HIM. THE CODE OF THE WARRIOR APSARA DEMANDS IT. I WAS LOOKING FOR SOME PRACTICE. YOU WILL DO.



ABANDON THE THOUGHT. YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST BALA.

AND AS FOR ME, I DO NOT KNOW WHICH OF US IS THE GREATER WARRIOR, BUT I WOULD LOVE TO FIND OUT.



YOU ARE A FOOL, IYAM. IF YOU HAD JOINED ME, WE MIGHT HAVE SAVED OUR WORLDS TOGETHER.

BY ALLOWING BALA TO GET THE SOURCE, YOU DOOM YOURSELF ALONG WITH ME.

YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR MASTER. WHEN HE NO LONGER NEEDS YOU, HE WILL KILL YOU.



BUT THAT IS NO LONGER MY CONCERN. LET THE WORLD PERISH, FOR ALL I CARE. I AM HERE TO FINISH MY ASSIGNMENT AND CLAIM MY BOUNTY.



THE DEVI IS MINE.



I FEEL SO WANTED.



GRUHH!



THIS ENDS NOW.



HRKK!



ALONE AT
LAST. ANY FINAL
REQUESTS?



YES.



PLEASE GET
YOURSELF A MORE
PRACTICAL WORK
OUTFIT.







LORD BALA!
WE HAVE FOUND
THE PASSAGE YOU
SOUGHT!

WHERE?



WE DEMOLISHED
THE CENTRAL ALTAR, AND
THERE WAS A PASSAGE
UNDER IT. LOTS OF DUST,
AND ONE SET OF
FOOTPRINTS.

LEAD ME
TO IT.



YES.
THIS IS THE
ROAD TO
VICTORY.



NOW, WATCH
THIS ENTRANCE.
LET NO ONE
THROUGH.

LORD BALA!



KRATHA HAS
BETRAYED US, AND
THE DEVI IS OUTSIDE. I LEFT
THEM TO THE DARINDE, TO
RESUME MY PURSUIT OF
THE SOURCE, AS YOU
COMMANDED.



YOU MAY NO LONGER SEEK THE SOURCE, FOR ME, OR FOR WHOMEVER IT IS THAT YOU NOW TRULY SERVE.

LET US DISCUSS MY LOYALTY OR LACK OF IT WHEN THERE IS TIME FOR DISCUSSION, MY LORD. THE BATTLE CONTINUES. WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS?



AMUSE YOURSELF AS YOU PLEASE. GO KILL SOME DURAPASYA, OR PERFORM SOME LEASER TASK, AS BEFITS A SERVANT WHOSE INTENTIONS ARE QUESTIONABLE.

ENOUGH!



WHAT DID YOU SAY?

I SAID ENOUGH, LORD BALA.

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE I SERVED YOU? HOW MUCH POWER HAVE I WIELDED IN YOUR NAME? DO YOU NOT THINK I HAVE HAD HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO TURN FROM YOUR PATH? THAT OTHER POWERS HAVE NOT SOUGHT MY TALENTS?

WILL YOU NEVER TRUST ME?



I HAVE NOT BETRAYED YOU, AND I NEVER WILL, WHATEVER THE COST.

TOMORROW, WHEN YOU RULE THE UNIVERSE WITH THE POWER OF THE SOURCE, MY LIFE'S AMBITION WILL BE FULFILLED. AND I WILL SERVE YOU STILL, AS A GENERAL, OR AS A SLAVE.

NOW, DO WHAT YOU WILL.





YOU SERVED
ME WELL, GENERAL
IYAM. IN THE PAST,
WHEN I NEEDED
SOMEONE LIKE
YOU.



BUT I NO LONGER
CRAVE ARMIES, OR LOYAL
ALLIES. I NO LONGER
CARE FOR ADMIRATION, OR RESPECT,
OR LOVE. MY FUTURE BECKONS,
AND SOON ALL LIFE IN THE
COSMOS WILL HAVE
TWO CHOICES;



OBEDIENCE
BABA...





...OR
PERISH.

TO BE CONTINUED

This one's for you, my friend

"Say not in grief 'he is no more' but live in thankfulness that he was"
- Hebrew proverb

In Memory Of Our Dear Friend

PUCKINFL

August 30, 1978 - February 21, 2007

Be At Peace

LORD IYAM!
The Red star IS
HERE!

