

Avatar

by Pamela McCaughey (2007)

based on UFO

created by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson and Reg Hill

Chapter One

It was a typically hot humid day at one of Calcutta's gargantuan marketplaces. Omega operative Mitali Raychaudhuri, resplendent in a gorgeous turquoise sari, was picking up a few things to take back with her to her hotel. Pungent spices fragranced the air - curry, cardamom, cumin, the distinctive mixture of garam masala.. Delicious fruit, brightly coloured fabrics, and handmade rugs from the northern provinces filled up the kiosks she wandered by. Other stands sold exotic posies and not a few offered taste-bud tantalizing edibles for just a few rupees.

She was about to purchase herself a mango lassi at a beverage kiosk when her cell went off. She paid the vendor, plucked herself a straw and rummaged in her purse to flip open her phone, "Aacha," she told the vendor when she waved off the change, "This is Mitali," she spoke crisply.

"Paul Foster here. Sorry to interrupt your vacation, but we may need you to investigate some alarming reports we picked up from the Bengali police."

"What's happening?" she asked in her clipped Indian tones.

"Vineet Bapat and I are flying in tonight - we'll need hotel rooms and tough transportation for a trip to the countryside."

"I'm heading back to my hotel now. I'll secure you some reservations and rent a vehicle for us."

* * *

"Other than Paul's alien mummy from Egypt, we've never had any female aliens, have we?" Vineet Bapat commented. "Yes, I did a quick scan of all the old reports and any alien bodies we've taken over the years have been male," Mitali confirmed.

"What's this business about the goddess Kali?" Paul asked.

Vineet flipped open his laptop to display a multi-armed, dangerous-looking female image, "Hindu legend depicts her as the wife of the god Shiva. She's believed to be very powerful and demanding of blood sacrifice to placate her. Even Alan Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb, quoted her from the Bhavigad Gita 'Behold I am death - I am the destroyer of worlds."

Paul was stumped, "Why would the aliens go this route now in the 21st century? If that mummy in the Egyptian desert was any indication - female aliens don't come here very often - once in every 3000 years?"

Mitali laughed, "Up to now, SHADO and Omega theorists have been of the opinion that alien females were few and far between - definitely not considered expendable. Or else they'd actually died out somehow. The alien breeding nests have been using kidnapped human women instead of impregnating their own females. Or they utilize techno-wombs like those we discovered on Mars. They're getting closer and closer to achieving success in their program -

it's just a matter of time before Orion has plenty of brothers and sisters."

"So what's the game here? Is it purely an attempt to collect human organs for transplant or is something at stake?"

Vineet said, "The aliens continue to take humans all over the world for organ collection, but coming here to India is tantamount to letting the fox loose in the hen house. Much as I hate to say this, many of my rural countrymen are neither educated nor lacking in superstition enough to laugh off this appearance of a goddess. The worship of Kali gave rise to the Thugees - a vicious band of her followers who strangled others as sacrificial victims to her. Bengal and several other states are still having problems stamping out her worship - it continues to thrive in the darker recesses of the rural areas and in people's minds. Even Mahatma Gandhi had trouble convincing the people that worshipping a goddess who demanded blood sacrifice was against his principles of non-violence." "The deeper symbology of Kali," explained Mitali, "Is the subjugation of men by a powerful woman. Hindu theologians have been at a loss to fathom her appeal, especially in the 20th century when urban Hindus were modifying their religious views. The Hindu faith has been remarkably tolerant and flexible in accepting the gods and beliefs of other denominations - that's why Islam, Christianity, Zoroasterianism and other sects have been permitted to flourish here. As Vineet pointed out, Gandhi urged the Indian people to take a gentler road, rather than following a deity bent on blood-letting. The aliens, by asserting that Kali has returned, are backing up the cultural clock of India by several centuries. Kali, in human form, is considered an avatar - much the same way 1st century Christians saw Jesus. Kali is represented as a black woman, with four arms; in one hand she has a sword, in another the head of the demon she has slain, with the other two she is encouraging her worshippers. For earrings she has two dead bodies and wears a necklace of skulls; her only clothing is a girdle made of dead men's hands, and her tongue protrudes from her mouth. Her eyes are red, and her face and breasts are besmeared with blood. She stands with one foot on the thigh, and another on the breast of her husband. Not a nice goddess at all. But, Kali is easily amongst the six most popular forms of god worshipped amongst Hindus today. There is a concentration of worshippers still in Bengal, Assam and parts of South India. She really is considered a manifestation of the uneducated old peoples of our country. Unfortunately, there are still adherents. And obviously those adherents are willing to believe Kali has come back to them. And, if Kali tells them to bring sacrificial victims, we can make the assumption that the victims are intended for organ harvesting or worse."

"After our experiences in Mexico and other places, there can no longer be any doubt the aliens have been coming here for thousands of years, shaping human evolution and beliefs to fit their own agenda," Paul frowned, "The whole business of alien incursion into human history and development is becoming almost too uncomfortable to think about. What's our next move?"

"Get out there and track down this bogus goddess. Put a stop to the renewed worship and killing, and capture this female alien," Vineet finished.

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It seemed as though every creature in the area of the vine covered temple to which frightened locals had directed the Omega operatives had stilled its voice. Paul, Mitali and Vineet watched in silence as they saw the temple priest light a bowl of incense on the temple's porch. The weathered stones comprising the small temple building seemed ageless and Foster, the non-local, remembered how ancient was the Indian culture and religious practices. As the scent filtered into the air, movements started in the underbrush. Men, dragging bound and

gagged captives, advanced towards the temple. Stepping down to greet them, the priest places some kind of oily markings on the captives' foreheads and intoned some sort of litany as each was presented to him.

"What's he saying?" Foster asked.

"Can't tell completely - Bengali dialect - but I think the priest is anointing them to be received by Kali," Vineet replied sotto voce.

Mitali nodded, "I wonder if we'll get to see 'Kali' herself...?"

They watched the terrified captives hauled up inside the temple and out of sight. The priest intoned what appeared to be a benediction and dismissed the Thuggees who'd provided the victims for the goddess. The men moved off through the foliage.

Once the men had disappeared, so too did the priest.

"Let's get a closer look," Foster whispered.

Despite its modern usage, the temple was in some disrepair. The stair stones were cracked and discolored with what could have been the blood of ancient sacrifices. The three Omega operatives stealthily crept their way up the ancient stone steps and saw a large bronze statue, with four arms and a menacing demeanor, inside the vestibule. Mitali signed "Kali" to the other two in American Sign Language, but there was little doubt as to the goddess' identification.

Two entrances opened off the main chapel, if one could call it that. Foster signed, "*Vineet, go left - Mitali and I will take the right fork. Ten minutes tops and get back out here.*"

Once inside their own passageway, Mitali and Paul discovered a stone stairway leading down, perhaps beneath the temple. They made their way as noiselessly as possible. At the bottom, there was another passage, obviously leading deeper underground. It was there they realized the two upper entrances joined, as Vineet appeared from the shadows.

All three moved down the new passage, single file, Mitali in the middle. They became aware of a low hum as they traveled further down. The air temperature changed as well, becoming much cooler.

The darkened tunnel ran for more than 300 feet in a softly descending angle of at least 25 degrees. As they continued, the temperature became chillier and the hum louder. A light beckoned them further and they came to the tunnel's end. Peering out cautiously, Vineet took in the alien installation. His eyes registered revulsion as he signed to the other two his first impressions. With no aliens in attendance, they slipped inside to take photos and investigate.

The reason for Vineet's disgust was apparent to see. There were two banked walls, lined with clear stasis containers. Inside each was a floating human, immersed in green liquid.

Mitali signed to the others, "*All packaged up for shipment.*"

What was worse were the unconscious humans, obviously laid out on flat slabs - ready to be processed. Fifteen of the most recent captives were lying there, tubes running into their noses from a central tank. The three Omega people could see green liquid coursing through the tubes into the poor unfortunates.

But, where were the aliens themselves? It seemed the humans had been processed very quickly - it would have been a job requiring several alien techs. And, where was the Kali priest they'd seen earlier? How were the aliens planning to transport this group of victims and when? Would it be possible to make a strike on the nest and free the humans before the aliens had the chance to ship them out?

Quietly inspecting the humans for signs of life, they noted their body temperatures had been lowered considerably and their hearts slowed to just a few beats a minute.

"Where are the aliens?" Vineet signed, it was the question they all shared.

"Can't be too far," Mitali replied in ASL, *"We just saw those people delivered a short time ago."*

"We have to destroy this facility," Paul signed back. Vineet and Mitali knew he was right, but destroying the nest would erase any chance they had of rescuing the victims, *"We can't wait for reinforcements,"* Paul signed again, *"That would take too much time. We're here - now. An air strike by Sky Twelve would cause too much ruckus - a small isolated explosion could be more easily explained away."*

"What about the aliens who must be here?" Mitali asked.

Paul's expression was grim as he said aloud, but quietly, "We'll have to find them and dispose of them first."

Chapter Two

Repairing back to the relative security of the tunnel, they discussed a plan of action. Paul and Vineet would go in search of the aliens while Mitali would use her cache of explosives to destroy the nest. The imperative was to keep the aliens from shipping out their human victims and make it impossible for them to work from this location again. The site would need to be remediated by an Omega clean up team but that was a secondary job. The task at hand was immediate. No matter how many times all three of them had undertaken such chores, the loss of human life had never become just a series of stats to them. They knew the cost and they regretted it. But even more lives would be lost if they failed to put that alien nest out of commission.

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When Paul and Vineet disappeared in search of the aliens who must surely be manning the nest, Mitali headed back into the room they'd seen before. She took another look around at the human captives and hoped they forgive her for what she now had to do. Squatting down on the floor so she could see the tunnel entrance, Mitali opened her backpack to extract her explosives. She had enough to turn the next into a smoking hole in the ground. And she had the gadgetry to rig a remote blaster so she and the others could safely get out and then set it off.

Mitali had just finished planting her charges when she felt the hair on the back of her neck rise...*she was being watched*. There was nobody in the tunnel. She turned 180 degrees...

Where had she come from? Was there some sort of secret passage to another part of the next? There was no more time for rhetorical questions as Mitali took in every detail of the apparition before her.

Standing a whole head taller than Mitali, the alien woman moved towards her. Two extra arms had been grafted onto her body, to simulate her appearance as the goddess Kali. Clad in a typical red alien jumpsuit, the female had flowing greenish tinged hair, as though she'd been breathing the oxygen-rich liquid the aliens utilized to survive in space and in Earth's atmosphere. Her huge eyes glowed with silver irises. The alien woman lifted one hand, palm out...her mouth did not move but Mitali heard the words in her head as clearly as if they'd been spoken aloud...

[You are here to destroy us...but you will not succeed...]

"I'm not alone," Mitali told her, edging away towards the tunnel entrance. If worse came to worse maybe she could make a run for it.

[We will stop you...] the female alien reached out with several of her hands, scooping up a number of sharp scalpel-like instruments from a tray beside one of the hapless human victims *[Your people are so fragile...]* and a strange smile crossed the alien's face.

Mitali only had time to dash to one side as the female feinted towards her. She back flipped away from the whirling arms, now bearing the deadly implements intended for her destruction. As Mitali moved past another slabbed human, she made a grab for a pair of scalpels to even the fight and dodged the alien again. How could she move so quickly?

The writhing arms gave the alien the appearance of a walking octopus...Mitali closed with her, ducking to avoid the upper arms, and dancing just out of reach of the lower limbs. She whirled away from the female, countering her moves and trying to get in under her guard for a strike. The female was fast, and Mitali was already sweating and out of breath!

[You will die...] Mitali heard the words in her head again, but felt no emotion attached to them coming from the alien. Her death was simply a task the alien female must accomplish,

and there would be no consideration of the fact Mitali was a living being like herself.

As the alien dove on Mitali, the Omega operative turned aside, in time to see the sharp instruments striking sparks off the metal slab. She dodged again, but stumbled and had to roll away quickly from the rain of blows directed at her. *Didn't this alien ever tire?* she wondered, beads of sweat threatening to pour down her face and obscure her vision. She back flipped again, this time picking up a narrow piece of metal from the floor. Using it like a staff, she parried blows from the alien woman, and knocked two of the scalpels from the alien female's hands. Twisting the metal staff again like a baton, Mitali struck the alien a direct hit on her chest, throwing her back against the edge of one of the slabs.

Without missing a beat, the alien surged forward, intent on yanking the staff from Mitali's hands, but Mitali managed to thrust her back down on the slab, causing her to drop another scalpel. She grabbed the knife up and leveled it at the alien's throat. The female reared up and head butted Mitali, throwing her off and causing Mitali to drop her staff. Before she could reach it, the alien attempted to slam her to the floor...she landed her two feet in the alien's midsection, casting her off backwards...the alien fell in a heap of wriggling arms and red fabric. Acting only on instinct and knowing she couldn't hold out much longer against such a superior foe, Mitali wrestled a scalpel from the alien's flailing arms and sank it deep into her chest! She was rewarded with a hot gush of blood, pouring out and puddling around the now inert alien body. Totally out of breath, her breasts heaving from the exertion, Mitali slowly stood up and staggered aside, wiping her face with her sleeve. She stared down at the dead female and heard herself mutter breathlessly, "The only good alien is a DEAD alien - BITCH!"

Mitali stumbled over to her pack and grabbed out the remote ignition device. She was about to arm it when Paul and Vineet appeared in the tunnel opening, "Let's blow this joint!" Paul yelled and Mitali knew he meant her to blow the place sky-high and exiting at the same time.

"Got a little distracted!" Mitali nodded at the dead female alien on the floor. Paul grabbed her arm and the three Omega operatives raced down the narrow passageway. They were only halfway out when they heard the first detonation going off - the resulting fireball paced them up the incline and right out of the temple! They leapt from the temple steps into the underbrush, while the subsequent blasts and explosions lit up the night sky...

EPILOGUE

"Hello, Paul! I hear you had quite an adventure in India last week!" General Straker smiled as Paul Foster entered his office and took a seat across from his desk.

"Kind of felt like Indiana Jones for a moment," Paul replied with a grin.

"And Mitali killed the female alien."

"Couldn't be avoided. You read the report...four arms and all of them deadly. Vineet and I had to battle our own way through a phalanx of aliens. They didn't give up easily. Worst of all, we had to abandon the aliens' captives. No way we could raid that nest and save any of them."

"How's Vineet doing?"

"He's fine. Doctor Davidson just certified him to go back to active duty. Just a flesh wound."

"I wish we'd been able to get our hands on that female..."

Paul could see where this was going. "Look Ed, Mitali was alone. That alien bitch was like something out of a Sinbad the Sailor movie. It was kill or be killed. Let it go."

"We could have learned a lot more about the aliens if we'd captured her. Are they all sterile? Why did they risk her on this gambit? Why now after all these years did they send a female here?"

Shaking his head, Paul said, "I know what you're saying but sometimes survival trumps scientific curiosity."

Straker sighed, "Well, Mitali's a tough cookie - she's already off on her new assignment."

"Righto. And I'm booked on the next flight back to New York. Our people have an investigation started in Utah."

"Anything I'd be interested in?"

"The usual MIB ops - in a polygamist settlement north of Salt Lake City - Lew Waterman says they're a bunch of Mormon fanatic who claim the angel Moroni has appeared to their chief elder - but it smacks of alien influence - missing people, strange lights at night - you know the drill."

Straker waved him off with a laugh, "Go forth, Paul and put down those false prophets!"

Pausing at the office exit, Foster looked back, "Tell me, do you believe in a higher power?"

"You mean like - God?"

"Yes."

Straker looked thoughtful for a moment before answering, "If I ever did, I stopped the first time I looked down at a body mutilated by the aliens for their organs."

"Suppose the aliens believe in any kind of god?"

"The aliens believe in only one thing - survival - that's their god."

THE END