

Finding Shambhala



BY - ADRIKA PAL

CHAPTER TEN: THE FINAL EMBRACE

The wind in Banaras had changed.



There was something different in the air—a strange stillness, as if the city itself was holding its breath. The ghats were quieter, the river slower. Aarya stood by the edge of the Ganga, watching the sunrise paint the water with golden fire. Her heart, though calm on the surface, trembled beneath the weight of what lay ahead.

Her bag was packed. The manuscript was carefully wrapped and tucked inside, close to her chest, close to her soul. It was not just parchment anymore—it was a heartbeat.

When she returned home, her grandfather was already waiting. He had lit a small diya and placed it before the family shrine. A faint glow danced in the shadows as he turned to face her.

“So... it begins,” he said with a gentle smile that barely masked the ache in his eyes.

Aarya nodded. Her throat tightened. “Are you sure... that I’ll be okay?”

“No,” he admitted. “I’m not. But I am sure that you were born for this.”

He took her hand, old and wrinkled against her youthful skin, and pressed something into her palm. It was a worn-out photograph—faded, nearly torn at the edges. Her great-grandfather stood in it, eyes fierce, standing beside a mountain pass wrapped in clouds.

“He made it,” her grandfather whispered. “He

saw the path. He never returned, but I believe... he never wanted to. He may guide you, perhaps even protect you. Blood remembers its promise.”

Tears welled up in Aarya’s eyes. “But what if I don’t come back?”

“Then it means the path kept you. And that’s okay. Some journeys don’t end with a return. Some are meant to complete you, even if they break our hearts in the process.”

There was a silence between them. Heavy. Sacred.

Her mother wept quietly in the next room, pretending to clean. Her father paced restlessly, avoiding her eyes. Her younger cousin left her a small sketch under her pillow —of her riding a snow lion into the mountains. No one said goodbye the way she expected. They all simply... stepped aside. Because deep down, they knew.

They always knew.

"You are the chosen one," her grandfather said again. "The protector. The witness to the birth of destiny itself. But remember, this is not a journey of pride. You are not going for us. You are going for yourself. For the truth. For the world that needs to be born again."

(Right after Aarya's grandfather tells her about her great-grandfather's journey)

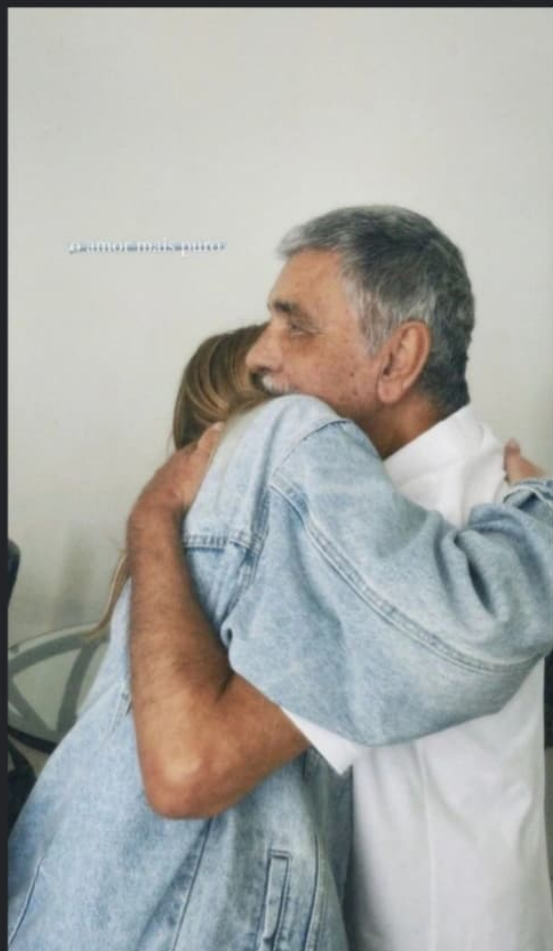
> "You are not just meant to witness, Aarya," her grandfather said, voice trembling with a mix of pride and sorrow. "You are the guardian of what is to come. The one who will protect the light before it rises."

Aarya froze. "Protect?"

He nodded slowly. "The birth of Kalki will not be untouched by darkness. Even the divine must be shielded in its first breath."

He paused, his tone suddenly heavier.

"There will be trials, Aarya. The gods do not open their doors without tests. If you return, it may mean you've failed. If you do not return, it means you've found what no one else could. Either way—be brave."



She hugged him tightly. He smelled of sandalwood, old paper, and a lifetime of quiet wisdom.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

"So was I," he replied. "And so was your great-grandfather. Fear is not the enemy. Forgetting who you are is."

That night, she left.

No fanfare. No crowd.

Just her shadow under a pale moon, walking away from the only home she had ever known.

Her heart heavy.

Her soul light.

And far ahead, in the unknown silence of the Himalayas, something ancient stirred—as if awakening... waiting... watching.

The path to Shambhala had begun.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE TRIALS AND THE GATEKEEPER



The Himalayas rose like ancient sentinels, cloaked in mist and mystery, their icy peaks brushing the sky. As Aarya stepped onto the snow-laced path, a strange calm wrapped around her, as if the mountains recognized her footsteps.

She walked alone, the sacred manuscript guiding her, not with directions, but with

subtle stirrings—gentle pulses in her chest, a whisper in the wind, an inexplicable pull toward places that felt older than time.

The first trial came silently.

It was not a storm, nor a beast.

It was within her.

A test of the soul.

The air grew heavy, pressing into her mind, dredging up every shadow she had ever hidden—her fears, her anger, her doubts. Memories twisted and echoed around her. The world grew silent, like a vacuum of time.

But she did not break.

She remembered her grandfather's words: "Fear is not the enemy. Forgetting who you are is."

With a steady breath, she faced every echo of herself, every crack in her heart—and forgave them. One by one. She wept, not out of pain, but out of clarity.

And the moment she did, the air shifted. Light

returned.

She had passed the first trial.

But the path grew wilder.

The snow deepened. Silence turned to strange sounds—echoes of footsteps that weren't hers... breathing that wasn't hers.

Then she saw it.

A colossal figure stood before her, fur like ancient clouds, eyes like glaciers. The Yeti.



The protector of the sacred gates.

Her heart leapt. Fear wrapped around her spine. The creature didn't roar, didn't lunge—it simply watched. As if waiting to judge her spirit.

She didn't move.

Instead, she folded her hands, closed her eyes, and stood still—letting her heartbeat speak in place of words.

And in that stillness, something incredible happened.

The Yeti bowed.

But as the tension eased, the earth betrayed her. A ledge gave way beneath her feet.

She fell—snow and rocks whirling around her. For a heartbeat, she thought it was over.

Until a massive hand caught her midair.

The Yeti.

She blacked out in its arms.

When she awoke, she was surrounded by light —not sunlight, but something gentler, golden, humming softly. She sat up slowly. The air was warm, filled with the scent of blossoms she had never smelled before.

Tall, serene beings in flowing robes stood around her. Their eyes were luminous, their skin almost glowing. There were no words, but she understood—they were the people of Shambhala.

Aarya blinked in disbelief.

She had crossed.

She was inside Shambhala.



Life pulsed differently here. Flowers bloomed in slow motion. The wind sang. Time... had stopped.

As she tried to comprehend it all, a familiar voice called her name.

She turned.

There he stood.

Her great-grandfather.

Still young. Still alive.

Not a ghost. Not a memory.

Tears flooded her eyes. She ran into his arms, trembling.

“How...?” she whispered.

He smiled. “You passed, my child. Shambhala does not exist in our time. It exists in God’s. Only those who are worthy, who carry light within, may find the gate.”

She looked around at the glowing land, the peaceful people, the silence that spoke louder than speech.

It was all real.

And all this time—her great-grandfather had been guiding her steps. Whispering through dreams. Watching over her.

“I knew you would come,” he said softly.
“Because it was written long before you were born.”

Aarya looked up at the golden sky above, her soul no longer seeking.

It had arrived.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE LAND THAT REMEMBERED HER



Shambhala breathed like a living hymn—soft winds carrying music that had no source, only feeling. Aarya walked through glowing gardens where time curled into spirals and light flowed like water. Every tree seemed to hold a memory, every stone whispered stories.

She was not just a visitor. She was home,

though she didn't know why.

The land felt familiar—not from books or dreams—but from somewhere deeper, as if her soul had traced these paths before.

She wandered in awe through a sacred valley where rivers ran with crystal light. There were creatures she had only seen in museum sketches—woolly elephants, birds of paradise, snow leopards, and tigers, all moving with serene grace, unafraid and untouched by fear. Species long thought extinct thrived here in harmony.

Even the trees spoke in rustling echoes. The sky carried colors no mortal eyes had named.

Here, there was no death. No decay. Only stillness that bloomed.

As she sat by the luminous lake, her great-grandfather approached her in silence, his face lit by a knowing peace.

“I have something to show you,” he said gently.

He led her through a corridor of temples—each carved not with words, but with light.

The walls shimmered with moving patterns: stars, spirals, and a familiar figure drawn in ancient style—a girl with long hair, standing before a radiant doorway.

Aarya gasped.

The figure was her.

“This... is me?”

Her great-grandfather nodded. “You were not born into this journey. You were born from it. You have been here before, in another yuga. You were a guardian once... of this land, of this truth.”

The room pulsed.

“You were sent back in a different age, to forget, so you could learn again. Your soul chose to return. And now... you’ve come full circle.”

Tears welled in her eyes.

She had always felt drawn toward old temples, sacred stories, ancient scripts... and now she understood why.

Everything in her life—her curiosity, her compassion, even her pain—had been a calling.

A prophecy.

“But why me?” she asked. “Why was I chosen again?”

He looked toward the sky, where a faint pulse of golden light flickered at the highest peak.

“Because the cycle is ending. Kaliyug is reaching its final breaths. And Kalki... will be born soon. The world must prepare. Shambhala must awaken. And only one with the spirit of the ancient guardian could enter the gates to witness the truth.”

> “You have passed through fire, storm, and soul,” the sage whispered, placing a sacred amulet in her hand. “You are more than a seeker now. The prophecies name you as the Dharma Rakshika—the Keeper of the Sacred Flame. It is your fate to guard the final avatar as he enters this world.”

Aarya felt the weight of the moment, not just in the amulet—but in her bones.

She stood in silence.

Not out of fear.

But reverence.

Her arrival was never chance. Her journey was never random.

She had not found Shambhala.

It had remembered her.

And now, as the stars aligned, she would prepare for the divine revelation—the prophecy that would shake the world, ignite the truth, and light the path for Kalki's return.

This was not the end of her journey.



This was the beginning of her real purpose.