



ต้นฉบับจาก meb ส่งให้นักเขียนคาลิ เพื่อนำไปแปลเป็นภาษาไทย  
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# Khemjira's Rescue

Cali ❀



ต้นฉบับจาก meb ส่งให้นักเขียนภาสิณ ชัยยนต์ฉบับฉบับพิมพ์ออกอากาศ  
เพื่อนำไปแปลเป็นภาษาไทย  
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# **Khemjira's Rescue**

**Cali**

ต้นฉบับจาก meb ส่งให้นักเขียนคาลิ ผู้เขียนต้นฉบับ Khemjira ต้องรอด  
เพื่อนำไปแปลเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ  
นำส่ง 14 Jan 2025

## CONTENT WARNING

This is a horror novel. The magic, beliefs, and incantations mentioned in the story are based on reality. There are descriptions of ghosts, violent scenes, blood, oppression, and abuse. Viewer discretion is advised for those under 18.

ต้นฉบับจาก meo ส่งให้นักเขียนคาลิ ผู้เขียนต้นฉบับเดิม  
เพื่อนำไปแปลเป็นภาษาฝรั่งเศสเท่านั้น  
นำส่ง 14 Jan 2025

## Prologue

In the dead of night, in a small house located in a slum, the small figure of Khemjira or Khem, an eighteen-year-old high school senior, was intently staring at the screen of an old computer as it was slowly downloading the results of his university entrance exams.

To his left was a desk clock striking midnight, and to his right, a small cake with a candle providing a flicker of light in the otherwise pitch-dark room.

The '*ticktock*' of the clock's second hand echoed in his head, amplifying the stress within his head until his lips were pressed tightly together.

Finally, the results came up, reading that he'd been accepted into the university and faculty of his choice.

"Yeeees!" Khemjira exclaimed with joy, clasping his hands in prayer, hoping for a smooth journey through university life, before leaning down to blow out the candle.

Indeed, today was Khemjira's nineteenth birthday.

In the dark room illuminated only by the computer screen's glow, the young man sat eating his cake while browsing through images of the university campus he'd been accepted to. He ate, looked at those pictures, and smiled contentedly until he glanced at the clock and jumped in surprise.

"It's two o'clock already?"

Tomorrow, Khemjira had to hurry to inform Luang Por [<sup>\*1</sup>] at the temple about this good news. With that thought, he quickly finished his cake, shut down the computer, washed the dishes, brushed his teeth, and went to bed.

In his slumber, Khemjira dreamt of something he'd never dreamt before.

His dream unfolded like an old film, showing a traditional Thai house from an era when there were still slaves.

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<sup>1</sup> Luang Por (หลวงพ่อ) is a title given to a Thai male monk whose age is around that of the speaker's father.

Khemjira saw a young girl running in the house, with several servants trying to catch her in vain. The girl laughed with delight and joy.

Then the scene shifted to an eggshell-colored wooden house, set in a time when cars were already in use, the atmosphere soft and reminiscent of the eighties.

Khemjira was standing in front of this wooden house, rudely peering into the home through the window.

He saw a couple sitting together at the dining table, sharing a meal and smiling at each other. Khemjira's brow furrowed as he watched the scene, feeling a slight pain in his heart, prompting him to clutch his chest.

**"What are you looking at?"** A cold, chilling voice came from behind him.

Khemjira's heart pounded with surprise, his body freezing as he felt the breath of the person who'd appeared behind him.

He tried to turn around, but his body wouldn't move. The warm atmosphere around him gradually cooled,

sending shivers down his spine as the eggshell-colored wooden house in front of him transformed into an eerie, abandoned house.

Khemjira gritted his teeth, trying to wake up.

*What the heck is this? Wake up! Wake up!*

**"Do you want to stay here together?"**

Khemjira jolted as he felt a faint breath move closer. His fear inundated his heart, causing his body to tremble.

**"Just the two of us."**

"..."

**"How about it?"**

For a split second, he considered agreeing just to escape the discomfort, but then he heard someone's voice.

**"Khem, it's time to wake up, dear."**

Khemjira jerked awake, sitting up in bed in a panic. He quickly looked left and right to see if there was anyone else in his bedroom before his eyes caught sight of something nearby.

It was the tiger-leather takrut [<sup>2</sup>] that he'd worn for as long as he could remember.

*When did it come off...?*

This takrut necklace was a magical item that had been enchanted by a Por Kru [<sup>3</sup>] that he couldn't recall. It had the ability to protect the wearer against unseen dangers. His mother had insisted that he wear it at all times.

Even on her last day of life, his mother had reminded him not to take it off.

The truth was that Khemjira was born into **a cursed family whose sons shall perish before they turn 20.**

To alter his fate, his mother had given him a girl name, 'Khemjira,' meaning 'to forever be safe.'

Even though Khemjira didn't particularly like the design of this necklace, he never went against his mother's wishes. After she'd passed away from a severe illness seven

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<sup>2</sup> Takrut (ตะกรุด) is a type of tubular amulet that originated from Thailand.

<sup>3</sup> Por Kru (พ่อครู) is a title given to a magic master.

years ago, he continued to wear it all the time, as it was like a protective charm his mother had left behind.

Over the past eighteen years, he'd been safe. There might've been minor accidents here and there, typical for someone a bit clumsy like him, but they were nothing serious. Everything had been normal until last night.

*For the first time in his life, this was the first time Khemjira had such a strange and indescribably frightening dream.*

He calmed himself down, even though he still had a chill from the realism of the dream. Once he regained composure, he picked up the takrut and put it back around his neck before getting up to shower and dress to visit Luang Por at the temple.

Khemjira took a songthaew, a type of public transportation, to the temple in the town where Luang Por Pinyo, his father, resided. His father had decided to become a monk for life about three years after his mother's death—Khemjira was exactly fifteen years old then.

He believed that this had been predetermined ever since Khemjira was a baby. The Por Kru, who'd given Khemjira the magical item, had instructed his father to find an auspicious time to become a monk for life to dedicate his merit to the family's karmic enemy [\*<sup>4</sup>] **in hopes of extending Khemjira's life.** That was the reason his father had explained to him, who was crying in protest of the decision.

Khemjira only thought that losing one parent, his mother, was already too much. He didn't want to lose his father, whether to monkhood or to death.

But in the end, he couldn't go against his father's and his other relatives' wishes. All he could do was stand there crying unwillingly, watching his father shave his head and don the yellow robes. He then turned his back and walked into the temple's ordination hall.

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<sup>4</sup> Karmic enemy (เจ้ากรรมนายเวร) is a vengeful spirit whom a person hurt in the previous life; as a consequence, it is seeking revenge in the person's current life.

After that day, Khemjira went to live with relatives on his father's side because his mother's relatives refused to take him in, fearing they'd also be cursed.

Outsiders might think they were superstitious, but everyone in their family and the village believed it wholeheartedly because no male on his maternal side had ever lived to see their twentieth birthday.

The paternal relatives who volunteered to take care of him were his uncle and aunt, who took the child support money his father had left and his mother's health insurance money and fled to live a comfortable life abroad from the first day they took him in, leaving only a few thousand baht and an old house for him.

Khemjira didn't want to worry his father, who'd just been ordained a few days earlier, so he kept silent. Even when his father found out later, there was nothing he could do.

He lived alone in that house and was fortunate that the neighbors were kind and regularly brought him food.

Plus, whenever he visited his father at the temple, he'd return home with plenty of food.

Moreover, his academic performance was quite good, so he'd been receiving scholarships from the beginning to the end of high school, making his high school life not too difficult.

He also entered the university by competing for a scholarship.

"Hello, Luang Por," Khemjira said after entering the parsonage before prostrating to the floor three times and then looking up with a gentle smile. His father looked back at him tenderly.

"Hello. Your exam result is out, isn't it?"

Khemjira scratched his cheek awkwardly with one hand while the other was still in a wai.

"How did you know? I was planning to surprise you."

Luang Por smiled fondly at him and said, "Yesterday, two novices left the monkhood. They told me that their semester is starting."

"Heh, I got into the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts at a university in Bangkok..." Khemjira's voice trailed off to almost a whisper, his hands still clasped in a wai, but his eyes slowly glanced at his father.

"Do you really have to go all the way to Bangkok?" He asked, his demeanor composed even though his eyes showed a glimpse of concern for his child.

Khemjira shrank a little more. He was fully aware of how much Luang Por worried about his safety; he had to live alone outside without any adults to look after him, not to mention that the curse was still active.

But Khemjira dreamed of becoming an artist. He'd been earning extra money by drawing for a while now, enough to cover the cost of art supplies and cheap apartment rent.

He wanted to excel in this career. If he were to die tomorrow, he wished to live his life the way he wanted at least once.

"The university around here doesn't have the faculty I want to study," Khemjira stated the reason truthfully, wanting his father to agree with him.

Seeing his son's determination, he decided to let his son do as he wished. And having been ordained as a monk for many years, Pinyo understood the truths of life. Birth, aging, sickness, and death were the nature of humans. He'd done everything a father could; the rest was up to fate.

"Well, if that's the case, then study hard and be mindful in whatever you do. Don't be careless."

Khemjira slowly smiled upon receiving his father's blessing and quickly nodded in response.

"Yes, Luang Por."

After a little more chitchatting, Khemjira paid his respects and said goodbye to his father to return to his unfinished work.

At that moment, Pinyo could only sit, watching his son's back move further and further away, accompanied by...*the shadow of more than one mysterious spirit.*

# Chapter 1

As the start of the semester approached, Khemjira moved his belongings into an apartment that was very affordable, albeit a fair distance from the university. However, this wasn't a problem for him, who preferred walking over driving or taking public transport as long as the distance was manageable. It just meant he had to wake up a bit earlier to go to class.

One might wonder why he came to study in Bangkok all alone, without a single friend to accompany him.

The answer was that Khemjira never had friends due to the curse in his family. Living in the countryside, everyone in the area knew about it, and no one dared to associate with him for fear of bad luck befalling them as well.

Khemjira understood this well; everyone loved their own life. If he were in their shoes, he'd do the same.

But that didn't mean he was bullied or boycotted by others. They could still talk. It was just that they weren't close enough to call each other friends.

This was one of the reasons Khemjira wanted to study in Bangkok. He wanted to have friends and be in a new environment.

After settling in, he went outside to find something to eat. The apartment wasn't only affordable but also located near a market, so there was no worry about having nothing to eat.

*Oh, this Pad Thai looks delicious.*

The aroma of Pad Thai wafting through the air made Khemjira stop in his tracks to place an order.

"One Pad Thai to go, please."

"Just one, dear?" The vendor asked.

"Yes."

**"What about your friend there?"**

Khemjira paused, slowly looking around before asking:

"Who?"

*Clang!*

The vendor accidentally dropped her spatula, her face turning pale before she forced a weak smile and said:

"Oh, my eyes must be playing tricks on me. Never mind. That'll be forty baht."

Khemjira paid for the Pad Thai and took it with a confused expression.

As he was about to cross the street, he accidentally stepped on his shoelace, stumbled onto the road, and quickly stepped back onto the curb. He then bent down to tie his shoelace.

*Screeeeech!*

*Crash!!*

Before Khemjira could crouch down, a loud crash sounded nearby, forcing him to quickly lift his head. His light brown eyes widened in shock at the sight of a sportbike crashing and wedged under a bus that was stopping to pick up passengers...

...right in front of him.

Everything happened in a split second. If he hadn't bent down to tie his shoelaces...

Khemjira's thoughts drifted to the curse, but he shook his head, trying to comfort himself with positive thoughts.

*It was just a coincidence. Nothing had happened before.*

Without realizing it, his hand was clutching the takrut hanging around his neck. He retreated from the chaos and immediately ran back to his room.

The next day, the accident became a news story on television. Khemjira, on his way through the apartment lobby to his room, paused to look up at the communal TV broadcasting the scene of the accident.

'Last night, a tragic accident occurred when a sportbike with license plate number กข XXX crashed into the back of a bus waiting to pick up passengers, resulting

in the rider's immediate death... The rider was a senior student at University XXX who'd just returned from a party with friends.'

Khemjira's heart sank upon hearing that the rider had died on the spot. His arms wrapped tightly around a water bottle he'd just filled as if to use it as an emotional support. He couldn't help but think that if his shoelace hadn't come undone at that moment, there might've been more than one death...

With just over a week left before the start of the university semester, Khemjira tried to live normally despite the haunting images of that accident. It wouldn't be good to keep dwelling on it.

He resolved that he'd have to be more mindful and cautious from now on.

"Done," Khemjira said to himself after he'd finished buying items to zone his new room and make it look more livable. Most of the items were second-handed.

He wiped the sweat from his brow. The wall clock showed it was almost eight in the evening. *'Time to hit the books,'* he thought, quickly sweeping up the trash into a trash bag to take downstairs.

The trash bin was located in a desolate alley next to his apartment. The only light in the alley came from a street lamp in the middle, which kept flickering on and off...

*...like a scene from a horror movie.*

The somewhat frightening atmosphere made Khemjira look left and right before hurriedly tossing the trash bag into the trash bin. But as he was turning to walk away, something caught his attention from the corner of his eye, causing his legs to freeze. His brain struggled to process what it was.

Curiosity got the better of him, and Khemjira decided to take a closer look. He saw the figure of a child wearing a dirty, tattered white shirt, crouching with his head down next to the large trash bin...

Khemjira was certain it wasn't a human because he hadn't seen anyone there when he came here.

Chill was gradually creeping on his skin.

*What kind of person would be sitting next to a trash bin in a dark, deserted alley at night?*

He swallowed hard before tearing his gaze away and hurriedly stepping forward, practically running.

*'So that was a ghost?'*

In his nineteen years of life, Khemjira had never seen one until now.

In the moment that Khemjira half-ran away, that thing slowly lifted its head.

Its mouth slowly stretched into a grin before standing up and staggered after the young man.

After that day, Khemjira began to experience more and more strange occurrences.

The first thing was that he had three accidents in one week, which had never happened to him before. For example, he was just walking and suddenly tripped and fell. The worst was when he nearly fell down almost twenty stairs. Luckily, that day, he managed to grab the railing in time. Otherwise, it wouldn't have turned out well.

Secondly, Khemjira started seeing spirits more often...

In fact, he was seeing one now.

Khemjira took a deep breath, pretending not to see the faint spirit of a woman in a working uniform standing with her head bowed in front of the door next to his.

She'd been standing there for three days now.

The owner of the room next to his was a man who lived alone with his son.

When Khemjira first saw her, he almost asked her if she needed help or why she wouldn't go into the room. But when he saw that she had no feet... he quickly opened his own door and went inside.

Khemjira thought she might be the wife of the man who lived there; she must still be worried about them and not ready to move on...

**"Don't... Hurt... My... Son..."**

Her voice was shaky and chilling to the bone. Khemjira's heart dropped, and his hands shook uncontrollably as he fumbled with his keys. It took him an eternity to open his door, and he nearly wet himself in the process.

His legs gave out, and he collapsed to the floor, his eyes burning with heat.

Did she just say: 'Don't hurt my son'?

*Is something happening to her son?*

That night, Khemjira could hardly sleep, haunted by what the spirit had said. Part of him didn't want to get involved, as he had enough troubles of his own, but another part was worried something bad might happen to the kid.

The next morning, around eight o'clock, after the man next door had gone to work, Khemjira stood in front of his neighbor's door, hesitating for a long time before deciding to knock.

The lady's spirit was still there, right next to him, but this time, she was so close their shoulders almost touched.

The door slowly creaked open, revealing the small figure of a six- or seven-year-old boy. However, because of the door chain, it only opened just enough to see the boy's face.

"Hi there," Khemjira said with a smile, crouching down to be at eye level with the boy. "My name's Khem. I just moved in next door." The young boy didn't respond but nodded in acknowledgment.

Khemjira sneakily peered through the gap and spotted several beer bottles lined up and a general disarray of belongings.

*What the hell...*

"Have you eaten anything yet?"

This time, the boy shook his head, and Khemjira felt a twitch in his eyelid.

*The dad went to work without making sure his kid had eaten?*

At the same time, a chill ran down his spine, giving him an uneasy pressure.

"How about you come have a meal with me? My treat. After we eat, I'll bring you back," Khemjira offered. The boy shook his head more vigorously than before.

It was then that Khemjira noticed the chain tightly wrapped around the boy's ankle, the skin beneath it badly bruised.

He slowly forced a smile as he said to the boy:

"Just wait here for me for a moment, okay?"

Khemjira went downstairs, bought some rice soup, water, and snacks, and brought them up for the boy to eat.

The boy hesitated, but eventually, his hunger won out, and he reached out to take the food.

"P...Please don't tell my dad I ate your food," the boy pleaded with a desperate face. It made Khemjira feel both heartache and anger, but he nodded in agreement.

"Okay, I won't."

That evening, after Khemjira reported the situation to the landlord, the police stormed in and arrested the man next door, who was drunk and beating his son.

Upon questioning, it was revealed that the boy was the son of the man's girlfriend, who'd died in an accident a month prior. The man was now burdened with a massive debt. With his girlfriend gone, there was no one to help pay it off, leaving him with the responsibility and stress that he took out on the boy.

Khemjira didn't know what kind of punishment the men had received. He only knew that the boy was now safely in the care of his maternal relatives.

*I hoped he'd be able to live a happy life.*

As he was about to fall asleep, he heard a whisper by his ear. But because he was so sleepy, he didn't open his eyes.

"Thank you."

"..."

**"And be careful."**

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## Chapter 2

Finally, the semester had started.

Khemjira looked in the mirror at himself in the university uniform with pride. He grabbed his tote bag, slung it over his shoulder, and went out.

It took him precisely one hour to walk from his apartment to the university. Exhausted, he stopped to buy a bottle of water from a stall near the faculty building to quench his thirst. There was still plenty of time before his class started.

"No straw, please," he told the vendor, who was offering him a plastic straw. He rarely used straws unless they were biodegradable, and if he could do anything to save the environment, he would.

Khemjira moved to stand beside the stall. While lifting the water bottle to his lips, his eyes caught sight of the bottom of a potted plant as it began to fall.

*'Oh shit.'*

"Look out!"

Khemjira heard someone shout a warning, but no matter how much he wanted to dodge, his body wouldn't move as if it were pinned in place. In the split second before the pot shattered on his head, someone rushed in and knocked him to the ground.

*Crash!*

"Ahhh!"

The sound of the pot breaking and people screaming followed.

"You okay!?" The man who'd rushed to save him asked with an alarmed expression. He had honey-colored skin, golden-dyed hair, and a small black headband on his head.

Khemjira turned to look at the broken pot with a pale face.

"Th-thank you for helping me," he managed to say once he recovered from the shock, then let out a soft cry when he was pulled to follow the man.

"Wait, wait, where are you taking me?" Khemjira asked. The man turned to him with a serious look. Khemjira was too scared to resist, so he obediently followed him. They stopped under a plumeria behind a study building, where it was relatively free of people.

The man looked around before locking eyes with him and said:

"You're being haunted by a ghost."

"..."

"If we don't do something, you're definitely gonna die," Khemjira's mouth fell open in shock. Being told something like this out of the blue by a stranger would startle anyone. With curiosity, he furrowed his brows and asked:

"How do you know that?"

"When that pot fell earlier, I saw it on the third floor. It pushed the pot down."

Khemjira wasn't ready to fully believe it, even though a part of him had already accepted it because of all the strange things he'd encountered since coming here.

"It's fine if you don't believe me. I just wanna warn you to be careful."

Khemjira hesitated before sighing.

"No, it's not that I don't believe you. I just don't want to accept it." Khemjira seemed to be speaking more to himself with that last sentence. "But thanks anyway, if it wasn't because of you, I would've definitely gotten hurt."

The man shrugged.

"It's nothing. I'm Jhet, Jhettana. You?"

"I'm Khem... Khemjira."

Jhettana blinked in surprise upon hearing his name, then gave him a quick once-over...

Khemjira gave a dry smile.

"My mom gave me a girl name to ward off bad luck."

Jhettana looked bewildered before scratching his head awkwardly.

"Sorry, your face kinda looks like a girl."

"It's okay. I looked even more like one when I was a kid."

Jhettana nodded as if to say, 'I thought so,' before continuing:

"So, which faculty are you in?"

"Fine and Applied Arts."

"Hey, me too! You're a freshman, right?"

Khemjira's eyes widened as he nodded eagerly.

"Y...yeah."

Jhettana laughed at the coincidence.

"Great, then let's be friends. First off, can I get your LINE?"

Khemjira was excited and quickly pulled out his phone to add Jhettana's LINE ID.

"Let's get to class first. We'll talk about your situation later."

Khemjira pursed his lips firmly before nodding slightly in agreement.

They had classes until three in the afternoon. After class, Jhettana took Khemjira to sit at the marble table behind the building, the same spot where they'd talked that morning.

"Do you fucking realize that you're being haunted by a goddamn squadron of ghosts?" Jhettana spoke bluntly, not giving Khemjira a chance to prepare. Earlier, he'd asked to speak informally with him because it felt more natural, and it sounded closer than otherwise, which Khemjira agreed to. However, Khemjira still preferred to use a milder tone himself because it felt more comfortable for him.

Khemjira answered with a mumble:

"I don't know... but there have been many times when I felt like I wasn't alone."

"..."

"And lately, I keep seeing strange things."

"Ghosts?"

Khemjira was stunned by Jhettana's blunt question before nodding in agreement, causing Jhettana to raise an eyebrow.

"So, you see other ghosts but can't see the ones close to you?"

Khemjira's eyes widened with shock.

"You can see them?"

"Yeah, but not clearly. Sometimes, it's like grey smoke; other times, they're dark shadows."

"..."

"Like the first time I saw you, there was both the smoke and dark shadows swirling all around you."

"..."

**"Serious question, dude. What the fuck did you do?"**

Khemjira swallowed hard, knowing he couldn't fully deny doing nothing. So, he decided to tell Jhettana about the family curse. Seeing Jhettana fall silent upon hearing it, Khemjira felt dejected.

"Sorry, I didn't tell you from the start"

"..."

"Jhet, if you want to stop being friends with me, that's okay. Ouch!" Khemjira clutched his head after being thumped, his face looking confused and awkward.

"Bullshit. Who the fuck would stop being friends with someone for a silly reason like that?" Jhettana said with a frown, prompting Khemjira to think of his high school friends and thought, 'plenty of them,' but he kept silent.

He smiled at Jhettana.

"Thanks."

"If I don't stay friends with you, I probably wouldn't have anyone else to be friends with."

"Ugh, Jhet, I was almost touched."

"Ha ha, your face is hilarious."

Khemjira scowled and said:

"Can you continue?"

"It's you who's getting us off track. Anyway, there are ghosts following you, fucking lots of them."

Hearing that, Khemjira felt a shiver run down his spine again.

"Even now?"

Jhettana frowned, looking around.

"Uh-huh, but they're hiding, not coming close."

Khemjira pursed his lips, feeling a surge of fear.

"It's like you have some powerful protection, or something is protecting you. That's why they can't do much."

Khemjira unbuttoned his top button and loosened his tie slightly, reaching in to pull out the takrut to show.

"I have this. I've been wearing it since I was a kid."

Jhettana leaned in to take a closer look, clearly very interested, but didn't presume to reach out and touch it.

"Good stuff, but the magic has worn off."

"What?" Khemjira was shocked. "How do you know that?"

"These are my stuff. I grew up with these kinds of things," Jhettana replied. The more Khemjira heard, the more anxious he became.

Could it be that the magic of his takrut was waning, causing him to see increasingly strange things these days?

"So, what should I do now?"

"Calm down, dude, no need to be stressed. Just give me your full name, date of birth, and something you use regularly."

"Anything at all?"

"Except your underwear."

Khemjira blushed, but seeing Jhettana's serious expression, he figured he wasn't joking.

Khemjira quickly grabbed a notebook and pen to jot down what Jhettana had asked and gave him a white handkerchief embroidered with his name.

It was a handkerchief his mother had embroidered for him before she passed away.

"Okay, and hey, don't just give stuff like this to anyone so easily next time," Jhettana said with a serious tone, making Khemjira frown.

"But you told me to give them to you, didn't you?"

"How can you be sure I won't use it for something bad?"

"Oh..."

"I'm just saying. You can trust me, but others, not so much. I just wanna warn you. What if someone put even more curses on you?"

Khemjira's face went pale, and he immediately nodded.

"Good. I'll be going back to my hometown over the holiday. I'll talk to **Por Kru** to see if he can help with your situation."

"Thanks."

"Sure. If you die, I'll have no friends left."

Hearing that, Khemjira wanted to throw something at him.

"Jhet, you fucking bastard, this is the second time already."

"Ha ha ha! You're cursing at me now, you little shit?"

Khemjira scowled and said:

"Stop annoying me. I'm stressed, you know?"

"Aww. There, there. Let's go. I'll take you for some shaved ice. I heard the place in front of the uni is good."

Khemjira reluctantly agreed and followed Jhettana, trailing behind like a duckling following its mother, even though he was still a bit mad at him. He wondered if they'd become too close too quickly.

They'd known each other for less than a day, but it felt like they'd been friends for much longer.

Khemjira was now firmly convinced that he truly had spirits following him.

Because Jhettana said that when he was around, the spirits wouldn't come near him because Jhettana had a magical item that protected him. Since that day, Khemjira had been glued to Jhettana. The only time they didn't see each other was when they returned to their apartments, but even then, no problems arose.

Well, Khemjira still had some annoying problems, like seeing things out of the corner of his eye or hearing creaks and objects falling, but they weren't so bad that he couldn't handle them.

Khemjira tried to keep himself busy by watching movies or reading books.

Today, Khemjira finished reading a book around nine in the evening before moving his chair to the easel that was set up for his drawing board. The next lesson was to assess their skill level from their sketch drawings on any subject they were good at, whether it be landscapes, people, animals, or objects.

Khemjira was good at drawing people and intended to draw a picture of his late mother, as he thought it was what he was best.

His delicate hand picked up a 2B pencil, holding it perpendicular to the paper, squinting to gauge the distance before starting to sketch the outline of a face with thin lines.

Khemjira had practiced drawing his mother's face for a long time. The memories he shared with his mother were etched in his heart, and he always felt warmth whenever he thought of her. That was why he could draw his mother's face just by picturing it without needing a reference.

"I miss you so much," Khemjira whispered with a smile to the smiling face of his mother as he worked on the details. But suddenly, he felt sleepy to the point where he had to stifle a yawn.

*Come on, don't get sleepy now. Just a little bit more, and it'll be finished.*

Khemjira told himself and tried to force his eyes to stay open. The drowsiness consumed him until his hand started to drop, and eventually, he couldn't resist it any longer.

Khemjira fell asleep just like that.

He dozed off and jolted awake again, glancing at the wall clock to find it was past two in the morning. He shook his head at himself and decided to put away the easel with the drawing.

"Shit!" Khemjira jumped up from his chair and stumbled backward until his hips slammed against the table behind him.

The sketch of his mother, once smiling and cheerful, had transformed into a woman with only black eyes, her slightly smiling mouth now grotesquely torn wide open to her ears.

## Chapter 3

Khemjira's legs trembled until he collapsed onto the floor. Just then, his phone vibrated. He pulled it out of his pants pocket and spoke without waiting for the other person to finish speaking.

[Khem, have you drawn...]

"Jhet! Jhet, help me!"

[Hey, what's wrong? What happened?]

"C...Can you come to my room? Jhet, please. Waaaaah."

Jhettana, who was drying his hair, widened his eyes in shock, dropped the towel, and immediately grabbed his motorcycle keys and rushed out of the room.

"I'm on my way. Keep it together, don't hang up, okay?!"

Jhettana revved his motorcycle and reached Khemjira's apartment in less than ten minutes. After parking, he hurried up to Khemjira's room and knocked on

the door. But no matter how long he knocked, no one came to open it.

“Khem, this is Jhet! Can you hear me?”

From knocking, he started pounding on the door while frantically twisting the doorknob with his other hand.

*Click.*

Suddenly, the door that was locked from the inside was opened. Jhettana didn't hesitate and burst in immediately.

“Khem!”

Jhettana found his petite friend unconscious on the floor opposite an easel with a drawing board on it.

“Shit...”

The frightening image of a woman's face made Jhettana's skin crawl. He quickly tore it off and crumpled it up without a second thought.

Jhettana tried to wake Khemjira a few times, but he wouldn't stir, so he had no choice but to carry him out of

the room, intending to let him stay at his own place for the time being.

Jhettana lived in a condominium that his mother had bought as a gift. His family was quite wealthy; both his parents were high-ranking government officials.

That night, Khemjira ended up with a fever so high that he couldn't go to classes. Jhettana had to attend classes alone to take notes for him. During the lunch break, he came back to take care of Khemjira, making sure he ate and took his medicine before returning to his afternoon classes.

"Khem, I'm going back home this evening. You stay here for now," Jhettana said to Khemjira, who was lying in bed with a fever patch. He really wanted to take him along, but he was afraid Khemjira might go into shock on the way.

"When are you coming back?" Khemjira asked with a hoarse voice.

"Sunday," Jhettana replied.

"Don't worry, I'll take care of him," said Jane, Jhettana's older sister, with a sweet smile as she stood with

her arms crossed, leaning against the doorframe, watching them.

Jane was an office worker five years older than Jhettana. It was rare for her to come and stay over. This time, Jhettana had called her to take care of Khemjira over the weekend while he went back to his hometown. Of course, nothing in this world was free; Jhettana had to buy her a new lipstick worth several thousand baht in exchange.

"Please take care of him, Sis."

Jane, whose salary for the month was still intact, smiled sweetly in response.

"Rogeeeer."

Jhettana took a two-hour plane ride back to his home in Ubon Ratchathani. The next morning, he went to see 'Por Kru Parun,' a shaman he revered. Por Kru lived in a large traditional Thai house at the edge of the village, a

good distance from the other villagers, almost bordering the forest.

It was well known within the village that Por Kru Parun was skilled in removing curses and treating mysterious illnesses. He had several students, and nowadays, he mostly just waited for people to come to him. Most of his visitors were people with bad luck, cursed or haunted by ghosts. In his free time, he'd enchant magical items to sell for a living.

But there were two things that he wouldn't involve himself with: black magic and karmic enemies.

A young man in his early thirties emerged from somewhere and sat down in his usual seat, which was covered with a dark carpet. Behind him was a Buddhist altar with a Buddha image, and like a typical shaman's school, there were baci [<sup>5</sup>], a silver-tiered umbrella, and a golden-tiered umbrella. However, because Por Kru

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<sup>5</sup> Baci (บายศรี) is a banana leaf-flower tray used in the blessing ceremony in Thailand and Lao.

practiced white magic, his altar only had Buddha images and no black magic items.

Jhettana smiled ingratiatingly and quickly raised his hands in a high wai, but before he could even open his mouth to speak, Por Kru interrupted him with a stern voice.

**“Jhet, what the hell have you brought into my house again?”**

Jhettana, whose hands were still in a wai, felt a chill run through his body before giving him a dry smile.

"Hehe, just what I expected from the Por Kru I respect so much. Here." Jhettana hurriedly took out Khemjira's handkerchief from his pocket and placed it on the golden tray beside him, along with a piece of paper and Khemjira's full name and date of birth. He then lifted it to place it in front of Por Kru.

"Could you please take a look and see if there's anything you can do?" After that, Jhettana recounted Khemjira's situation to Por Kru.

Parun felt the urge to kick this troublemaker out of his house, but the faint fragrance from the handkerchief drew him in, compelling him to pick it up for a closer look.

It smelled nice, but sometimes it was mixed with the pungent odor of spirits, *and one of them was particularly powerful...*

Parun placed it back where it was before pulling out the paper with a name and birthdate to read.

'Khemjira Jantrapisut.' Por Kru furrowed his brows.

*Khemjira?*

Strange, he felt an inexplicable familiarity with the name, but when he couldn't recall where he'd heard it, he stopped trying to remember. He read the birthdate of the name's owner, then took out his own notebook and pen, wrote down the birthdate, and began to calculate.

Several minutes passed before he finished, and the result was quite alarming.

"Who is this?" Parun asked while his eyes were still reviewing the results in his notebook.

"It's a friend of mine, Por Kru. How does it look?"

"Tell your friend to do whatever he wants to do. **He won't survive past this year.**"

Jhettana's face turned pale as he spoke anxiously:

"Can't you help him at all?"

"I've told you before, I don't deal with karmic enemies."

Jhettana pursed his lips, looking at Por Kru with dissatisfaction because if he said that, it meant he could help, but he chose not to...

"Please, Por Kru, just help him a bit. Please have some sympathy for him. He's a good person. He wouldn't even dare to swat a mosquito or step on an ant, so please..."

Before he could finish, Por Kru raised a finger to point at his face, causing him to shrink back in fear.

"Jhet, don't meddle in others's fate. Just because he's a good person in this life doesn't mean he was one in the past lives. You better be careful, too. Don't think that just

because you have strong luck, nothing bad will happen to you."

Jhettana's face fell immediately, knowing full well that Por Kru was resolute. He was a man of his word. Changing his mind was almost impossible. Yet, he couldn't help but express his woe.

"Khem is really pitiful, Por Kru. His mother died, and his father became a monk for life since he was little. His maternal relatives won't take him in, and his paternal family abandoned him; they even took his money and ran away. In high school, no one dared to hang out with him because they were afraid of the curse. Only I dared to be his friend..."

So preoccupied with his complaints, Jhettana didn't notice Por Kru inscribing a yantra [<sup>\*</sup><sub>6</sub>] on Khemjira's handkerchief until it was thrown in front of him.

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<sup>6</sup> Yantra (ยันต์) is a sacred geometrical, animal, and deity design accompanied by Pali phrases that are said to offer the bearer power, protection, fortune, charisma, and other benefits.

"Take it. This is all I can do."

Por Kru's spirit-repelling yantra, normally costing five or six thousand baht, was very effective, as confirmed by a user like Jhettana. Not a single spirit could enter his room.

Jhettana didn't know if Por Kru did it out of annoyance or pity for Khemjira, but he was so grateful he almost jumped to hug Por Kru. However, he only thought about it, knowing that if he actually did it, the household spirit might come out and snap his neck first.

"Thank you so much!"

Jhettana took an early Sunday morning flight back from Ubon Ratchathani to Bangkok. Upon arrival, he hurriedly took a taxi back to his condo, where he found that Khemjira had fully recovered from his illness.

"I'm going then," Jane said as she grabbed her bag and slung it over her shoulder. Before leaving, she didn't forget to leave a warning:

"Jhet, be careful. This is really bad. **Last night, they were standing packed on the balcony,**" she said with fright before hurrying out of the room.

Soon after, Khemjira emerged from the bathroom.

"Oh, Jane left already?" Khemjira blinked and asked.

"Yeah, her boyfriend was waiting for her downstairs, so she rushed off," Jhettana replied. Hearing this, Khemjira made a face of disappointment.

"I haven't properly thanked her yet."

For the past two nights, Jane had been by his side, even refusing to sleep. Khemjira didn't quite understand why Jane was so determined, but she'd told him, 'I don't dare sleep, Khem.' Back then, he had a terrible headache, so he didn't bother her any further.

Jhettana affectionately ruffled Khemjira's hair, choosing not to share what Jane had told him to avoid causing him unnecessary worry.

"Well, we'll see her again. You can thank then," Jhettana said, and Khemjira nodded. He then pulled him to

the sofa and handed back the handkerchief he'd borrowed. The white handkerchief was adorned with a white yantra.

"Thanks. Oh, it has a yantra on it," Khemjira noted, and Jhettana nodded in confirmation.

"Yeah, keep it with you. The yantra from Por Kru can protect you from spirits, but only to a certain extent."

Khemjira then quickly stashed it in his jacket pocket, feeling an odd sense of comfort.

"What did he say about my situation?" he asked, looking up with curiosity.

If Jane hadn't stayed with him over the last two days, Khemjira would've been driven mad by the recent terrifying events. He was desperate to know whether Jhetanat's Por Kru would agree to help, but due to the poor cell phone reception in the area, they hadn't been in touch.

*I didn't want to get through something like that again.*

"Sorry, man. I tried to talk to him, but he doesn't really want to get involved with karmic enemies."

*Karmic enemies... So, this is more than just regular spirits, right?*

Khemjira pursed his lips, his heart sinking instantly.

"It's okay. I understand."

Seeing his friend's dejected demeanor, Jhettana felt that he couldn't just let this be as it was.

"Don't worry. I won't let you die that easily. I'll find another way."

Khemjira's hope reignited at Jhettana's words.

"There is another way?"

Jhettana shrugged and said:

"No, it's the same way. But this time, I'm taking you with me."

"What?"

"Even I wanted to help you just by seeing your face. Let's see if Por Kru can stay tough when he sees you."

Khemjira was dumbfounded. *What kind of logic was that?*