

THE FUNERAL FIRE!

It's still burning

Kriti. K

NOTE FROM QRII

WHO DOESN'T LOVE TRAVELLING? SOME PEOPLE LIVE FOR IT—THEY ENJOY VISITING NEW PLACES, EXPLORING HIDDEN CORNERS OF THE WORLD, AND COLLECTING MEMORIES THAT LAST A LIFETIME. FOR THEM, EVERY JOURNEY IS A STORY WAITING TO BE TOLD.

BUT NOT EVERY PLACE IS MEANT TO BE VISITED. SOME PLACES HOLD SECRETS... AND SOME SECRETS SHOULD NEVER BE UNCOVERED. THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE SUCH PLACE.

A young couple set out on a trip to Marma Gaw, a village known for its eerie silence and unsettling legends. They were full of excitement, eager to explore a new place, but deep down they carried an uneasiness. Everyone had warned them that Marma Gaw was not a safe destination. Stories of black magic, strange rituals, and restless spirits drifted around the village like smoke from an unseen fire.

MARMA GAW



Still, curiosity was stronger than fear. They convinced themselves that legends were nothing more than superstition. Hand in hand, they entered Marma Gaw—unaware that their visit would soon draw them into a mystery that had been burning in the village for centuries.

The couple stepped deeper into Marma Gaw. The streets were empty, the houses worn down, and a heavy silence hung in the air

**When they asked for a place
to stay, every villager refused,
SILENTLY
their eyes filled with fear.
Only one frail old women
finally spoke. Her voice
trembled as he warned,
"This village carries a curse,
beta. Go back before it's too
late. The fire that burns here
is not for the living."
The couple exchanged a
glance and forced a smile.**

We are not afraid," they replied. "But tell us—why don't we see any children or people our age here? Why is the village filled only with old faces?"

The old lady's eyes clouded. she did not answer. she only pointed toward the distant funeral ground, where smoke curled endlessly into the sky.

The old woman's eyes clouded.
She whispered,
"Because people here are afraid.
Either they abandon their
homes, or they send their
children away to the cities. No
young life can survive here."

Her words echoed in their minds,
but the next morning the couple
could not resist exploring. The
valley spread before them was
breathtaking—lush green hills,
crystal streams, skies so clear it
felt like heaven. "This is even
more beautiful than
Switzerland," the girl whispered,
her fear almost forgotten.

But beauty has teeth. As they walked through a quiet meadow, the girl suddenly cried out. A sharp pin had pierced her little toe, and blood began to flow. The wound was small, yet it throbbed with an unusual heat. Alarmed, they decided to cancel their plans and hurry back to the village.

When they arrived, a chilling sight awaited them. The entire village was shut tight—doors barred, windows closed, curtains drawn.



Not a single soul appeared. Even when the boy knocked desperately for help, no one answered. Behind the silence, it felt as if every eye was watching from the shadows.

Just as despair began to settle, the door of a small hut creaked open. An old aunty stepped out, her face wrinkled but kind. She guided them inside, offered them food, and gave them a place to sleep.

That night, the couple's spirits lifted. They laughed, spoke of their future, and even shared their excitement for their upcoming marriage. The boy typed a message to their parents: "We are coming home soon." But the network was weak, and the message remained unsent, hanging in digital limbo. By dawn, the girl awoke with a strange uneasiness. Her face had gone pale.

Suddenly, she coughed—
and to the boy’s horror,
blood poured from her
mouth. Her body trembled
as nausea gripped her.
The boy panicked, but the
old aunty acted swiftly. She
brewed a bitter herbal
mixture and forced the girl
to drink. Within an hour, the
girl’s breathing steadied,
and her color returned
slightly. She smiled weakly,
whispering, “I feel better
now.”

That evening, as shadows stretched across the village, the boy's heart nearly stopped at the sight before him. The girl—his love—was thrashing herself with a belt, each strike landing harder than the last.

Tears welled in his eyes. “Why are you doing this? Stop, please!” he begged, rushing toward her.



**Why are you doing this?
Stop, please!**

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But she turned to him, her face twisted in pain and fury. Her voice, hoarse and unnatural, cut him like a blade:
“Because of you... you made me. You are bad.”

The boy staggered back, broken by her words.

The next morning, horror returned in another form. He found her crouched on the ground, her lips smeared with blood, tearing apart the flesh of a dead crow.

He screamed her name, but she only glared back with a hollow, soulless expression. Moments later, she doubled over, vomiting blood, staining the earth beneath her.

By evening, a new madness consumed her. She sat silently, cutting her nails down to the flesh, letting the broken pieces fall into her lap as though part of some ritual.

The boy felt trapped in a waking nightmare. Fear, grief, and anger battled inside him. He was traumatized—yet also growing restless, even annoyed by the endless cycle of horror.

He wanted answers.

The next morning, the boy woke to a chilling silence. The girl was gone. Her side of the bed lay empty, her belongings untouched. Panic raced through him as he rushed outside, calling her name. No answer.

He turned to the old aunty. Her eyes avoided his. Finally, she muttered, “She has gone to the hill.”

His heart sank. Without another word, he sprinted toward the hill, a sick realization clawing at him. Something was terribly wrong.

When he reached the top, his blood froze. Below the cliff was a wide cemented pit—inside, an unnatural fire burned endlessly, flames leaping hungrily despite the absence of wood or fuel.

And there she was, standing at the edge, her eyes glazed, her body trembling as if pulled by an unseen force.

“Stop! Please, don’t do this!” he cried, racing toward her. But before he could reach, she leapt into the fire.

The boy fell to his knees, his screams tearing through the valley.

And then... he saw her. The old aunty stood in the center of the fire, untouched by the flames, her face twisted into a monstrous grin. Her laughter echoed like thunder.

"You still don't understand, beta," she hissed. "It was never me... It was you. You are the criminal. Remember that."

The fire roared higher, swallowing her figure, leaving only the boy's sobs in the cursed silence.

But then... the truth clawed its way into his mind. Memories shifted, twisted, and revealed themselves.

It wasn't the girl who had gone mad.

It wasn't the aunty who had cursed her.

It was him.

He remembered—he had forced her to eat the crow's flesh. He was the one who raised the belt, striking her fragile body. It was his hands that pushed her toward the fire... and his hammer that delivered the final blow on the hill.

The old aunty had only been a shadow, a mirror of his guilt. As the realization consumed him, the fire flared higher. The aunty's face appeared again, but this time she was vast, monstrous, her mouth opening unnaturally wide. With a laugh that shook the earth, she swallowed him whole—like he was nothing more than a crumb of bread.

And then silence.



The villagers had never opened their doors, never dared to come out—because for them, the couple was already invisible. They were trapped in a curse no one could see. But the funeral fire still burned. And after their disappearance, more cases began to rise... more travelers drawn in, more souls lost. The fire fed on them all. The curse of Marma Gaw lived on.

Soul burning

KRITI KUMARI

The funeral fire burned in the snow,

It should not, but still it glowed.

True to itself—a stranger from hell,

Growing more mad, yet thinking all's well.

You dream, you fear, you cannot flee,

Its flames are hunger, eternity's plea.

And at last, it burns with silent cheers...

The fire that feasts on endless years.