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What in the world does a millionaire, real estate Millennial of New York City have to do with an ancient superstition from the Middle East? And *why* is that ancient tale intruding on Trevor Mesa’s life and one of his long-time tenants?

New York City; Manhattan. USA. Present Day...

“...Yes, ma’am...Ye— Yes, ma’am...Ok, I’ll—ma’am, I’ll be over as soon as I can...Yes, it’ll be by subway...Ok, I’ll hurry,” Trevor said; finally hanging up his smartphone. He let out a discouraged sigh. “Christ...”

He had just gotten his falafel-bowl and sat down on a bench when one of his long-time tenants had called about a situation with her apartment in Harlem. He was one of New York City’s up-and-coming realtors, but Trevor still worked another gig on the side by renting several apartments throughout the borough. He stuffed the olive oil-laden falafel in his mouth with his plastic spoon after gathering his laptop-satchel and Styrofoamed-latte. Trevor then made sure his hipster-beard had no crumbs on it with a couple of quick strokes with his hands—almost as a dairy

farmer did with his or her hands while milking a cow! He then headed straight for the nearest subway entry...

132<sup>nd</sup> Street; Harlem. Anam Shehez's residence...

Trevor finally made it to his small complex of apartments in Harlem that he rented out. It wasn't the largest property in the neighborhood, but it was one of the most updated complex on the block. He was supposed to be showing a very wealthy, potentially *new* client a loft that Trevor had just renovated months ago. He was relieved that the social media magnate was flexible enough to push the show-date to another day. Trevor was one of those Millennials with not only his head on straight, but so was his heart. He had just turned 30 a few months ago, and was already a multi-millionaire with his own real estate business!

But to Anam Shehez, she just needed him to be a good landlord right now...

"Mrs. Shehez," Trevor said to her as he reached her location; several yards away from the apartments, "may I ask why you're out here? Was there someone in the apartment after all?" It was approaching dusk and there were several people hustling their way to home or the bars after work.

All she did for a while was shake her head repeatedly. She kept her head down before responding. “Mr. Mesa, I don’t understand why a rich man like you won’t get a car! You could have gotten here sooner!”

“Not with New York’s traffic, Mrs. Shehez. And especially *this* time of day…so, what’s going on?”

Now she looked back, toward the complex; her traditional Pakistani dress and trousers colorful in comparison to their surroundings. Trevor looked on with her, but he couldn’t see anything worth catching the widow’s attention. Again, she started shaking her head. “I thought it was him, Mr. Mesa…”

His head went back and forth between the elderly Pakistani and the three-storied apartments. “You mean *Mr.* Shehez? Mrs. Shehez, I’m sorry but your husband passed away four years ago.”

“Yes, I know…I just thought maybe…” She sighed. But her head never actually stopped shaking. “Something is not right, Mr. Mesa…there is something in there that has the presence of Abdel, but clearly is not!”

Trevor took in a deep breath and slowly exhaled. He looked around the neighborhood at all the busy New Yorkers and a few tourists. Mrs. Shehez was almost like an aunt to him. He knew

she was very superstitious, but he did not want to come across as condescending.

“I take it calling the cops would’ve been a waste of time,” he said; more of a statement than a question.

“Usually they’ll tell you there would have to be something more threatening before they send someone over. Besides, this is outside of their expertise… I recorded it with my phone. Did you want to see it?”

Trevor looked at her with surprise. That should’ve been the *first* thing she showed him *before* their conversation! Again, Trevor was willing to work with her. He took a step over to where she stood and took her smartphone as she offered it to him.

Trevor had to take the phone off rest-default before he played the short video. Indeed, in the shot—taken in Mrs. Shehez’s small living room—appeared to show a ghostly, moving image of some being slowly walking; just passing the wall that led to her short hallway, and the apparition was gone! The recorded video footage then began to jostle as Mrs. Shehez quickly walked to the area of the hallway where the being was spotted. The footage then showed that she turned around the corner from the living room that led to that same hall, and there was a flash… not of

light, but of some unexpected form that enveloped the video's field of vision!

But there were no breaks in Mrs. Shehez's recording. In the video, one could hear her yelp as the dark-flash popped right in front of her! Next was the empty hallway; as its image jerked back and forth in the recording while Mrs. Shehez is heard crying in the background...then the video ended.

Trevor's eyes had cut over to Mrs. Shehez; the rest of his body unmoving. She merely looked at the young realtor. The first thing that came to his mind was, whatever it was he saw in the video, how was it that it seemed to pass right through her or passed her, yet she showed no signs of any injury. Which, on its face, was good news.

However...

"Mrs. Shehez," Trevor said after a moment's thought, "would you mind if I were to share this footage with a friend of mine who's well-versed and practiced in..."

"Ghosts?"

He looked at her. There was a bit of askance to her and Trevor felt some pity for the octogenarian. "I was going to say the Paranormal...her name is Jenny. She's traveled all over the

world for studies of the Paranormal and I think she's just the person for this."

Mrs. Shehez merely nodded; tears beginning to well up in her eyes. She watched as the young man, very deftly, typed a long series of commands into her smartphone and then Trevor handed the phone back to Mrs. Shehez. She looked at her phone, then back at the young millionaire with strained brows.

"Well, don't you need my phone to share the recording with your friend?"

Trevor, at first, froze. He had to remind himself that most people in their sixties—much less their eighties!—simply don't use social media! He began to laugh hardily.

"Mrs. Shehez, it's all done electronically."

"Oh...I believe I actually understand that, now!"

They both went silent. Both surveyed the neighborhood as night began to darken the sky. Streetlights were now automatically switching on.

"Mrs. Shehez, do you have a relative or friend that you can spend the night with tonight?"

She thought for a moment. She nodded her head. “One of my sons… I did not want to be a bother… he has his own family. I can’t see going back in there, Mr. Mesa!”

“You don’t have to tell me, Mrs. Shehez! I’m sure your son will be more than glad to have you stay over. Should we call him?”

Mrs. Shehez placed the call to her son. It was all in Urdu. After she finished her conversation with him—which, of course, included the situation she found herself in—she replaced her phone back into her pocket and gave a thin smile to Trevor.

They decided to walk over to a nearby diner to wait for her son. Trevor bought dinner for Mrs. Shehez and himself. It would be about forty-five minutes before the middle-aged man drove up in a nice car—one of those old school, big American luxury vehicles. He got out and met Trevor and his mother outside of the diner. He shook Trevor’s hand and thanked him for taking care of his mother, especially since his father had died.

Fazal Shehez, in simple jeans and a sweatshirt—most likely he threw them on in a hurry—insisted that he drive the multi-millionaire Millennial to his home in the Chelsea area. But Trevor wanted to stay and go into Mrs. Shehez’s apartment and check out the situation for himself. He always carried all his

properties' keys with him. New York City was simply too dense to have to turn around and go back home just for a key!

By the time the Shehezs had left for Fazal's home it was dark outside. Trevor made his way to Mrs. Shehez's apartment...

When Trevor opened Anam Shehez's apartment door, the aroma of curry wafted passed him. Tomorrow, he thought to himself, he would make it a point to have lunch from any of the international restaurants that made curry!

The apartment was modest and relatively bare; predominately styled in the traditions of Pakistan. Mrs. Shehez was in such a hurry she left her flat screen tv on. To be able to listen for anything out of the ordinary, Trevor turned it off with the remote. The stark silence after the flat screen went off was almost troubling itself, even *with* the apartment's lights on!

Remembering Mrs. Shehez's recorded video, Trevor took out his own smartphone and began recording his inspection. Later, he thought, he would share the video with his Paranormal friend, Jenny Housman. She lived out in Westbrook, Maine; one of the suburbs of Portland, Maine. She had moved there with her husband and their two daughters from New York City after her husband had gotten a good job offer from a call center firm. They were the best of friends since middle school. Indeed,



sometimes Trevor wondered if that friendship between the two was the *real* reason why Jenny's husband sought a job far out from New York. But close enough for the family to travel back to the city to see relatives and friends...

Twenty minutes later Trevor had completely inspected Mrs. Shehez's apartment for anything suspicious. He simply could not find anything outside the Normal. He began to wonder if the elderly woman was beginning to suffer from Munchausen. Again, it *had* been four years since her husband's death...

"Whoa!" he yelped! It was a call from Jenny. Her thumbnail-sized pictured avatar was lit up with all the contact info on Trevor's smartphone!

"Woman, you have impeccable t—"

"Where are you?"

Trevor froze. "I'm at Mrs. Shehez's apartment... She went to stay over at—"

"Good," Jenny's curt, high-pitched voice punctured. "Now *you* get the hell out of there, Trev...now!"

Of course, he was going to ask why, but he knew that Jenny would just insist even harsher. More to the point, he trusted

Jenny and knew there had to be a very good reason for her demeanor.

So, Trevor ran straight out of the apartment! He had the presence of mind to lock the front door before slamming it shut behind him as he virtually flew out of Mrs. Shehez's apartment! A couple of his other tenants saw him nearly crash into the wall opposite of the apartment's front door in the apartment's hallway! They both started toward him, but Trevor waved them off, graciously. He lied to them about tripping over one of Mrs. Shehez's rugs as he was walking out of the apartment, after doing a welfare check-up on her. That did the trick, and Trevor calmly left the complex and began walking toward the subway area.

He called Jenny back.

"Where are you now," she asked once again.

"I'm heading toward the subway—"

"Please don't...I'm heading out there, now. I'm driving out to Portland's airport as we speak, Trev."

Trevor flinched. "Jenny, what the hell is going on? What's spooked you so bad?"

“I’ll explain when I’m there with you. I don’t want to talk on a plane about *the craft*, you know what I’m sayin’?”

Her ways of putting things made Trevor laugh. It was one of the things he adored so much about her.

“Ok, an hour and a half is not such a bad wait.”

“And, Trev?”

He had decided to go back to the all-hours diner he and Mrs. Shehez had eaten earlier to wait for Jenny. “Yeah?”

“You really should get you a car, you filthy rich man!”

Two Hours Later, at the dinner…

Trevor and Jenny had done all the hugging and joking that two good friends do when they haven’t seen each other for months. They had ordered coffee and waited until the server walked away before they got to business.

Jenny had brought only a portion of her Paranormal equipment with her on her flight from Portland, Maine. One of the tools was an electronic tablet that she adapted for her researches in the Paranormal. She slid it toward Trevor for him to take a look…

It took a while, but Trevor realized what he was looking at. “This is from part of Mrs. Shehez’s video that I sent you during the day!”

“Yup…” Jenny, a couple of years older than Trevor; also wearing thick-rimmed glasses, gestured with a jutting chin for him to inspect the still-image further.

The server showed up again, this time with their coffee, cream, and water. Trevor went ahead and paid and tipped the young woman and continued to stare at the image on the etablet.

“What the hell is that,” he finally said, giving up.

She reached over the table of cups of coffee and water and began to tap in some commands. Jenny leaned back in her seat with satisfaction. The video from Mrs. Shehez was, once again, playing, but with several filters added: for dark and light contrasts, for shadow-reductions, some sharpening of outlines…

All those filters helped sharpen, though not perfectly, the image of that dark-flash toward the end of Mrs. Shehez’s video. Jenny had also set the etablet to loop that flash-point of the video.

The being, very dark-brown with dark mustard-orange sclerae for its eyes, could be seen leaping in front of the Mrs. Shehez’s phone-camera. *If*, in fact, that was what it was doing. Again, the quality of the footage was a bit grainy, but it was the best that

Jenny could do with, apparently, footage taken from a Paranormal encounter! The being seemed humanoid in appearance, but clearly it was *not* of the sapiens lineage! Indeed, from some of the details of the recording of the being's surroundings—Mrs. Shehez's hallway—the being looked a lot larger than most humans! It had a shock of hair; its arms held out, as if it were almost beckoning someone!

Without even having to say a word, all Trevor did was slowly raise his eyes from the electronic tablet and put them on Jenny. She obliged.

“ ‘I Dream Of Jeannie’ … ‘Aladdin’ … you know, the ol’ rubbing the ancient oil lamp and what we call *today* a genie smokes out and grants you wishes … *that*, my friend, is a bona fide djinni.”

By that time, Trevor was nodding while watching the looping video on the etablet. “With a ‘d.’ Yeah, I read about that in art history … aren’t they from the mysticism of the Sufi sect of Islam?”

“Well, djinn are mentioned in the Quran, and the Sufi are usually more associated with the concept of the djinn. But it’s kind of a regional thing in the Middle East going back far more than three *thousand* years *before* Islam was even founded! Kind of like paganism with the Europeans before they took to Christianity,

right? Mind you, other parts of the Middle East farther away from ancient Mesopotamia had their own spin on the djinn...”

Jenny leaned forward in her seat at the diner-table and did some swiping on the electronic tablet to bring up another window from another website that she, apparently, had saved on her tablet. The image brought up was of ancient Mesopotamia, but the rendering looked very similar with early- Medieval European Christian paintings! Instead of Roman lettering, Arabic calligraphy adorned the ancient page which the artwork was painted on. To the right within the scene, loomed a large, dark caricature of a djinni holding a male human that was mostly naked. To the left of this djinni were other mythical beings—one with wings and a set of horns atop its head as it appeared to be flying down from the heavens while two more beings were planted on the earth. Each of *those* creatures actually looked more animal-like and distorted than the giant djinni depicted in the ancient painting!

The one thing that stuck out most to Trevor was how the smaller beings facing the seated giant holding the human *all* had their hands out toward the djinni—as if in a pleading or beckoning gesture. Very similar how the djinni was holding *his* hands out in that dark-flashing moment from Mrs. Shehez’s recorded video!

Trevor hovered a pointing finger at this observation; careful not to touch the interactive monitor. “Right here…what are these other creatures doing, Jen? It’s almost as if they’re trying to *coax* the djinni into giving the human to *them*!”

Jenny looked at Trevor with a smile that he recognized. He was on to something, but she wanted Trevor to figure it out for himself! He looked at Jenny’s guiding smile, then back at the ancient parchment on the etablet. He thought for a while…

“This is an ancient tale *from* the Middle East…Mrs. Shehez and her husband are from Pakistan—a bit on the eastern edge from Mesopotamia, but a lot of shared cultural themes…that’s got to be a connection! And—and in this ancient scene, it’s almost as if the djinni is trying to protect the human! If not, then…”

“Why wasn’t Mrs. Shehez hurt in the encounter, Trev,” Jenny asked with some sympathy.

Again, Trevor thought for a while as his eyes went to his cooled cup of coffee; trying to dig deeper into the weird world of the Paranormal that was more suited for Jenny and *not* him! “I was wondering about that myself…” Then, Trevor flinched! His head snapped from the table and his eyes peered at Jenny.

“There were *two* apparitions recorded! I—I had forgotten with

all the… the first one was slow-moving, like how an elderly man might walk—”

“Yes,” Jenny responded; but her smile was gone from her face.

“Mrs. Shehez turned the corner while chasing the first apparition, and… and that’s when that flash happened—the djinni jumped right in front of Mrs. Shehez…”

Both sat silently; staring at each other. Jenny already knew the answer, but Trevor was not far behind. It was something he didn’t like the answer to, but the logic behind the whole incident, the ancient history, and the Paranormal expert’s guiding hand all seemed to converge at that point!

“A refill for either of you,” the young server had asked; an old-fashioned glass coffee pot in hand. She seemed to catch on that the conversation at the table was on the heavy side.

“I’ll take some more, thank you,” Jenny said with a bright smile that beguiled the mood at the diner-table.

“I’m good, thanks,” Trevor said absent-mindedly as he continued to look at that painting of a tale from antiquities. He reached into his jacket-pocket and produced his smartphone. With a couple of swipes, Trevor had made a call.



“Yeah, hello, is this Fazal Shehez; Mrs. Shehez’s son? Ok, good. Look, I was calling to—. When…? Oh my god…heart attack?” He looked at Jenny, but she kept drinking her cup of coffee while she looked out the window of the diner; a knowing-look on her face. “Yeah, my condolences, Mr. Shehez…Yeah, I’ll get in touch with you later about her things…No problem, Mr. Shehez; that’s what a good landlord is supposed to do…”

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