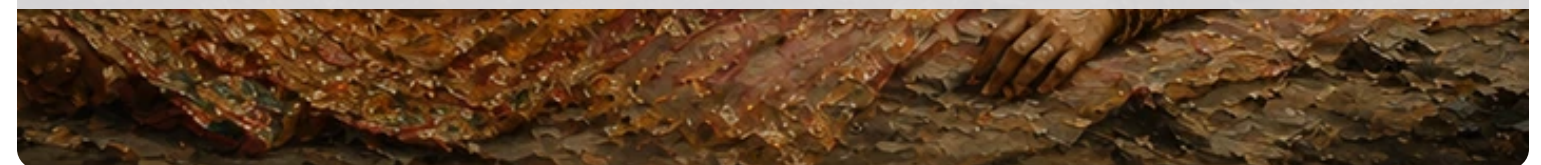




The Crystal Tomb and the Owl Prince

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Deep within a suffocating, sunless forest, the twisted bark of ancient trees bore the shapes of weeping human faces. A feral creature named Buddha lived among the shadows, surviving on the meager offerings of the swamp as his human mind slowly eroded into beastly madness.



Perched upon the gnarled branches of a sheora tree, the spectral forms of the Shakchunnis drifted like pale mist. Their echoing whispers pierced through Buddhu's haze, telling tales of a shimmering Crystal Palace lying three treacherous rivers away.



The ghost-women spoke of a beautiful princess named Kalavati, sealed alive inside a glass coffin by a monstrous warlord. Driven by a sudden, aching spark of his forgotten humanity, the cursed owl-prince spread his great feathered wings and took flight into the starry night.



Buddhu soared over jagged mountains and braved the roaring currents of three mystical rivers, each boundary bringing him closer to the frozen heart of the demon's domain. The bitter wind howled against his feathers, but the memory of the princess kept his spirit ablaze.



Upon reaching the gates of the Crystal Palace, a chilling silence hung heavily in the air. The grand courtyard was a graveyard of old legends, littered with the frosted skeletons of brave knights who still clutched their rusted swords in a final, frozen stance.



Stepping into the great, shadowed hall, Buddhu beheld a terrifying sight on the central dais. A massive, hairy beast known as the Khokshosh sat upon a throne of bones, its teeth like jagged daggers and its immense ears dragging along the icy stone floor.



Beside the slumbering demon king rested the magnificent crystal tomb, glowing with a faint, sorrowful light. Inside lay Princess Kalavati, her eyes wide and staring blankly at the ceiling, trapped in a cruel state of living death while her essence slowly withered.



Creeping forward with absolute silence, the owl-prince approached the glass coffin, his large eyes reflecting the princess's pale face. He tapped his sharp beak gently against the enchanted crystal, searching desperately for a fracture or a way to break the dark spell.



Suddenly, the giant demon stirred, its crimson eyes snapping open as it let out a deafening roar that shook the palace foundations. Buddhu shielded the tomb with his wings, facing the towering monster with a fierce bravery he hadn't felt in centuries.



With a final, desperate surge of magic, Buddhu shattered the crystal glass just as the demon lunged forward. As the confinement broke, a warm light erupted from Princess Kalavati, banishing the shadows and restoring the prince's true form in a dazzling display of triumph.