



The Ghost of the Banyan Tree

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In the quiet village of Shonapur, a massive, ancient banyan tree stood at the crossroads. Its twisted roots dug deep into the earth, and its heavy branches cast long, eerie shadows that kept the villagers away as soon as the sun began to set.



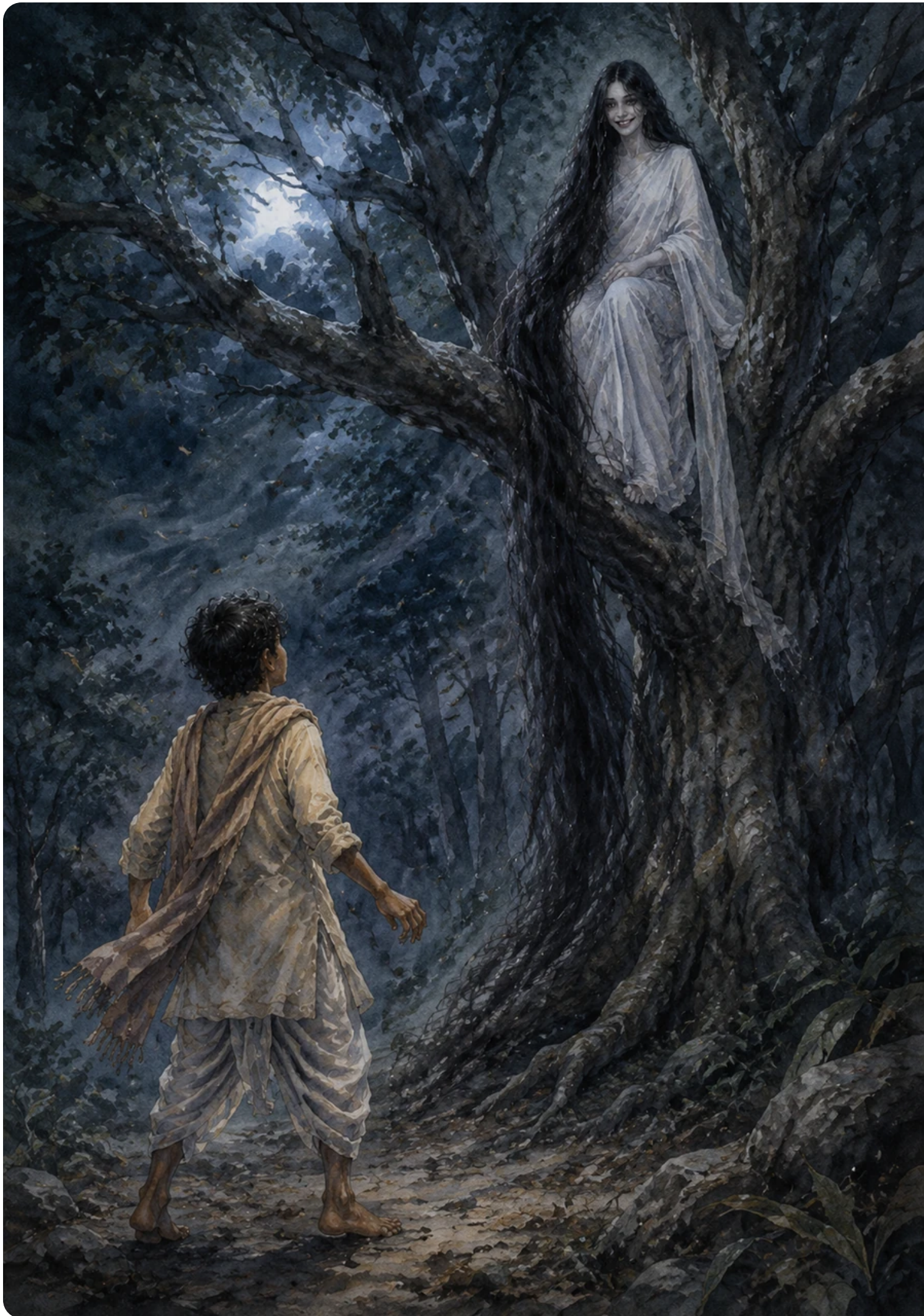
The elders whispered terrifying stories about a woman in a pure white sari who haunted the tree. They claimed she sat among the branches in the dead of night, quietly combing her impossibly long, dark hair with a glittering golden comb.



While the rest of the village locked their doors at twilight, a curious and brave boy named Ratan could not stop thinking about the legends. Driven by a daring spirit, he decided to venture out into the moonlit night to see the spirit for himself.



As Ratan crept closer to the towering silhouette of the banyan tree, the usual nighttime sounds of crickets and frogs suddenly faded into a heavy, suffocating silence. Through the stillness, a faint, rhythmic sound echoed from above: shrr, shrr, shrr.



Ratan froze in his tracks as a sudden, icy wind swept through the air, making the leaves shiver despite the breathless night. High up on a thick branch, he spotted a pale figure draped in white, her endless hair cascading all the way down to the roots.



The woman turned her head slowly, and the moonlight caught the fiery gleam of a magnificent golden comb sliding through her tresses. In a voice as soft as rustling leaves, she whispered that she had been waiting a very long time for someone to return her comb.



Trembling but trying to remain brave, Ratan stammered back that she already held a beautiful comb in her hand. The spirit gave a wide, unsettling smile that revealed far too many sharp teeth, sending a jolt of pure terror through the boy.



The ghostly woman locked her hollow eyes onto Ratan and softly declared that the comb in her hand belonged to him. Before he could run, a strange warmth filled his palm, and he looked down to find an identical, glowing golden comb resting in his hand.



The next morning, the bright sun washed over Shonapur, but a dreadful realization quickly spread through the worried community. Ratan's family found his bed empty, and his footsteps abruptly stopped right at the edge of the haunted banyan tree's roots.



Deep in the grass beneath the ancient branches, the villagers discovered the glittering golden comb gleaming in the morning light. Ratan was never seen again, leaving behind only a chilling legend and a warning whispered to every child who dares to wander after dark.