



The Winner of Chommanard Book Prize 2021

The Best of Fiction Novel



*The Lost  
Fairy*

# THE LOST FAIRY

Bound by Beauty  
Lost in Love

Chanintron

The Winner of the 10th Chommanard Book Prize 2021  
The Best of Fiction - Novel (2021)



Elite Creative Literary Agency



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# Publisher's Foreword

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*The Lost Fairy* by Chanintron was originally written in Thai and went on to win the prestigious Chommanard Book Prize for Best Fiction, a long-standing major literary award for female authors in Thailand. This powerful and emotionally layered novel explores the pressures faced by modern women, especially when it comes to body image and self-worth, in a society obsessed with appearances.

Chanintron's background is in finance and accounting, a high-pressure field that led her to seek relief in writing more easygoing, romantic stories as a hobby, inspired by her love of fantasy and romance. That influence is reflected in *The Lost Fairy*, where the smooth, engaging storytelling style contrasts with the emotional weight of the themes it explores.

The story follows Grace, a young model struggling to maintain the "perfect body." Beneath the surface of her glamorous life, she battles bulimia—a serious eating disorder where a person eats food and then purges to avoid weight gain. While most women may not take it as far as Grace, the pressure to achieve an ideal figure and the search for a single standard of beauty weigh heavily on women everywhere.

Central to Grace's journey is Angel, a talented chef whose grounded and compassionate nature serves as both a contrast and a refuge from the intense pressures of Grace's world. Angel's passion for cooking and his ability to create comfort through food highlight the emotional complexity at the heart of their relationship.

Through Angel, Grace experiences not just love, but also the difficult process of embracing herself.

Grace is not a perfect person—her journey is marked by cycles of trial and error as she grapples with the weight of societal expectations and her own internal conflicts. The story doesn't offer easy resolutions, but it captures the raw and often messy process of learning and healing.

What makes *The Lost Fairy* compelling is not a dramatic plot or shocking twists, but the author's gift for crafting subtle, meaningful moments that reveals the inner lives of the characters. Chanintron's writing draws you in effortlessly, weaving together witty dialogue and emotional nuance that makes each character feel vivid and real.

It's a rare skill to create characters who feel this alive and before you realize it, you find yourself invested in Grace's story, rooting for her through her highs and lows.

This remarkable novel balances light, engaging storytelling with deep emotional insight. The author reminds us of the deeper truths about beauty, self-acceptance and human connection—lessons we can discover whether we're standing at the peak of success or struggling through life's darker moments.

Chanintron's debut novel is a fresh and captivating voice in contemporary literature. Its blend of emotional honesty, sharp social commentary and engaging storytelling makes *The Lost Fairy* a standout work that will resonate with readers both in Thailand and internationally.

**Woman Publisher**

# Preface

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I began writing this novel from a few short notes I had scribbled down in my notebook:

*“A woman trapped within herself, the fragile state of the human mind,”* and *“A shallow and superficial society.”*

Flipping to the next page, I found more ideas I had long wanted to turn into a novel but never did—caught up instead in writing lighthearted fantasy romance for entertainment rather than serious social commentary. Working in finance and accounting, a high-pressure field, I often sought relief in writing more relaxed, easy-to-read stories as a hobby.

But when I heard about the 10th Chommanard Prize accepting manuscript submissions for novels, I felt it was time to finally bring these deeper ideas to life. I’m incredibly grateful that the judges found *The Lost Fairy* compelling enough to publish.

*The Lost Fairy* tells the story of modern love while keeping the sense of romantic fantasy I’ve always been drawn to. It explores the life of a young woman in the modeling industry, an industry that looks beautiful on the surface, but is often stained with tears, forever altering the life of one young girl.

At the heart of the story is a social issue that may seem insignificant about body image. The pressure to conform to idealized beauty standards, reinforced by social media’s obsession with perfection, leads the protagonist to struggle with self-image

to the point of developing an eating disorder. Her emotional fragility and dissatisfaction with herself push her toward a cycle of trial and error in life.

The story unfolds through the eyes of this young woman, taking readers along on her emotional journey. My hope is that, along the way, her story will offer readers insight or perhaps even inspire them in their own lives. If only in small, but meaningful ways.

**Chanintron**

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# Prologue

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**My pale, faded eyes feel as though they're about to change color. I press a green marker against the mirror, tracing over the spot where my eyes should be.**

My weight dropped satisfyingly this past week. I touch the bone jutting from my hip, imagining how it will look when I wear something tight. My stomach will sink into a deep hollow between the ridges of my hipbones. I reach for my Polaroid camera and snap a picture of myself through the mirror's reflection.

Me... in my underwear. It might be the kind of behavior that points to a psychological disorder, but I like it. I like how I look—like an anorexic model. It's another picture to toss into the drawer, joining the others: me in light blue, white, and dark green underwear, pink boxers with lace trim, checkered patterns and more. A collection of lingerie worn by my thin frame.

I like looking at myself in the detail of a Polaroid. It makes me feel as though I'm the only one who can love this body and the spirit within it. As if I don't need love from anyone else because I have enough love for myself. I hop onto the vanity table, tilting my head toward the ceiling light. I turn the Polaroid camera toward myself and press the shutter.

The photo captures my face and in the mirror's reflection, the sharp outline of my spine pressing beneath my skin.

A faint, light gray silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing left and looking upwards. The person has long, wavy hair. The background is a very light, hazy landscape with a horizon line.

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# Angel Called

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Lunchtime... Angel always steps out for a cigarette. It's the only time during the day that he'll call me.

"What are you doing? Can you talk?"

"Of course... I'm just waiting for the studio to be ready this afternoon."

His job is demanding. People think being a chef is easy—it's not. He's on his feet all day, standing over a hot stove, cooking under pressure while maintaining high standards. Someone as clueless as me could never handle that. But Angel is sharp. He's always quick and composed.

I've visited him at work before, watching him in his element. But I don't like the restaurant he works at now. It's nothing like the back of that Waffle House Kitchen, the one with greasy smoke stains on the walls above the grill and the cook singing along to songs. Angel used to be happy there, humming as he cooked, always smiling. Cooking was like an art class to him—the only moment that seemed to put him in a good mood... But that was a long time ago.

"Sound echoey," he says. "Are you in the bathroom?"

"Mm-hmm. Peeing." I tease.

He laughs.

The sound of a toilet flushing echoes from another stall. I wipe the smudge of lip gloss from the corner of my mouth. The

bright light above the mirror casts a pale glow over my makeup-caked face—pale as paper, with fake lashes, heavy blush and a carefully drawn-on beauty mark. I look like an unfinished portrait from a century ago.

I hear him inhale deeply on the other end of the line and the phantom scent of his Camel Blue cigarette fills my nose.

The bathroom door swings open. A tall girl steps out, wearing the same outfit as me, but in peach. She looks terrible. I catch a glimpse of her in the mirror before adjusting the front of my wig. Right now, I should be focusing on my own problems.

“Can you stay at my place tonight?” He says softly. I hum a quiet yes in response.

The girl beside me leans against the sink, her hand resting on the marble edge. Her skin is so pale and thin that the delicate web of veins beneath the surface is visible.

“I want to hold you the moment I get home,” he says. “We’ll have some wine... Sex under the covers...”

I smile at myself in the mirror, hearing his soft laugh, followed by a deep inhale.

“God...” He murmurs. “I have to go. Pete’s off today, so it’s just the trainees in the kitchen. It’s going to be a long day. See you tonight. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I place my phone on the edge of the marble sink. The girl next to me doesn’t look well. She sways slightly as she grips the sink.

“Are you okay?” I ask, still watching her through the mirror.

She shakes her head, making her long, blonde wig ripple with the movement.

“Should I loosen your corset a little? I’m feeling suffocated too.”

Finally, she lifts her face. Her pale gray eyes glisten with tears on the verge of spilling over. Seeing someone cry in front of me always startles me. I reach into my handbag, pull out a tissue

and hand it to her. She takes it and murmurs a soft sound under her breath.

“Thanks... Loosening it a bit will help.”

Today’s fashion shoot has a semi-conservative theme with an undertone of female subjugation. Honestly, I have no right to criticize the job I was hired to do, even if the outfit and styling make me feel like a Victorian woman caught in the aftermath of a shipwreck.

“They’re going to spray water in your face, smudge your mascara and tear your dress apart at the end, so you don’t need to look too perfect.” I say this, trying to lighten the mood while loosening the laces at the back of her peach-colored dress.

She laughs, pressing a folded tissue to the edge of her lower eyelid.

“Thanks again. I feel much better. I guess some days you just really feel like crap about life.”

I don’t respond—just lift the corner of my mouth into a faint smile.

She leans toward the mirror, adjusting her contact lens with a fingertip. Beneath the gray lens, her eyes are a beautiful shade of green. She stops there, then glances sideways at me with a mysterious smile.

An odd taste fills my mouth.

It’s the same taste you get when you eat French fries with ketchup.

“Doreen...” I murmur as her slender back drifts away, leaving me standing there like a lifeless statue in a gothic dress.

Doreen isn’t a stranger. Her sharp nose and delicate face have always lingered in my mind. She’s like an imaginary friend—a green-eyed, blonde-haired girl who used to call me *Gracie... Gracie...*

This girl—she looks just like Doreen.

“Make it more seductive. Imagine you’re heading to a new

world, becoming the mistress of a shipping tycoon. Try to feel excited... Radiant." The photographer's director whispers.

I move with the girl who looks like Doreen and another model, all of us wearing extravagant, wedding-inspired dresses designed with inspiration from early 1900s high society. The director keeps barking the same instructions into the photographer's ear over and over again.

I'm playing the part of a refined young woman in a luxurious gown. Head held high, like a modern-day nun dressed in white. But beneath the surface, she could just as easily be a prostitute, gasping for air beneath the tight grip of a corset. The photographer's rough, low voice irritates me as he tells me to lie down in this uncomfortable dress.

"Elegant... Now tilt your head... Eyes up at the camera... Yes... Just like that..."

His feet are so close to me that he might as well be stepping on my chest. I turn my head and bump into the other model. My eyes stay wide open under the harsh glare of the reflectors. The corset digs into my chest and I know exactly what he's photographing—me and my breasts spilling out from the top of this suffocating dress. For God's sake. This is insane!

Today's photo session ends with my face looking like a wreck. After changing out of the dress, I head to the bathroom to wash my face. Mascara stings my eyes as it mixes with the cleansing foam, causing irritation. I groan, feeling for the faucet with my eyes still closed. But before I can turn the handle, the water suddenly starts rushing.

"No one's called me that in a long time." A soft murmur comes from beside me. I quickly splash water on my face, rubbing hard at my eyelashes before looking up at my reflection in the mirror. My face glistened with droplets of water.

The girl is standing there, smiling. She's wearing a long black dress with a matching scarf.

"What did you say?"

“Doreen... You called me that.”

I pause, piecing it together. I hadn't expected her to hear me mumbling as she was walking away. I press a towel to my face, dabbing away the water and look at her more closely. Her eyes are a shimmering shade of green and a sly smile curls at the corner of her mouth.

“You're Doreen?” I asked, my heart racing in a strange way.

“Now I'm Daliz Luel.” She raises a finger to her lips and then opens her arms, pulling me into a hug.

I freeze, stunned and confused. She hugs me tightly while I stand speechless, unable to say a word.

At that moment, I remember Doreen's father's voice. How he used to tell me how sweet I was, how perfect I would be as Doreen's big sister and how the two of us would grow into the most perfect girls.

“I'm so glad we found each other again,” Doreen says.

Stockholm syndrome...

*A temporary psychological condition, a feeling of sympathy toward a kidnapper while being held as a victim.*

I don't really believe those explanations, but it's clear that this strange condition can happen.

It's kind of like those stories about being abducted by UFOs—accounts of alien features, implants and tracking chips that don't actually exist.

For me, the memories of that time are blurry, like scattered puzzle pieces that got lost along the way. I can't remember the face of the man who took me. But I remember there was a girl who stayed with me. She called him, *the man who kidnapped me*—Father. And her name was Doreen.

I was six years old at the time. For two weeks, I traveled around in the back seat of a car with Doreen and her father, the kidnapper. I don't remember much. I just remember feeling homesick, but strangely happy.

Father, that's what he told me to call him, would always buy

me Happy Meals. I loved him because he let me eat things my mom never allowed at home. Even now, every time I eat McDonald's or dip French fries into ketchup, I think of those brief moments. It's a feeling I can't explain—something that I don't want to think about, but at the same time, I quietly long for it.

Father would gently stroke my hair and I never felt alone because Doreen was always there—beautiful little Doreen... Looking at me with those clear green eyes. We looked so similar, like mirror images of each other.

I'm fairly sure nothing terrible happened to me. I only remember that one day, he let me go. Or maybe not exactly let me go. My memory of that moment is hazy... Just that we were staying in some roadside motel. He didn't lock the door when he left me alone with Doreen.

Doreen was asleep when I turned the doorknob and stepped out into the dim light of early evening. I walked down the road until a car pulled up and the driver honked. He rolled down the window and asked where I was going.

At that moment, I didn't think about danger or risk. I got into the car with a complete stranger. I told him:

*"I want to go home."*

Since that incident, I wasn't allowed to go anywhere alone. My mom would pick me up and drop me off everywhere: At school, the library and friends' houses. I wasn't allowed to sleep over at anyone's house either, though sometimes I'd get so angry that my mom would give in. She became paranoid about losing me, almost to the point of obsession.

By the time I turned fifteen, I had learned the meaning of *freedom* and wanted to start making my own decisions. I remember asking my mom to let me go. I can still see her sitting on the edge of the bed, crying while my dad sat beside her comforting her until she finally fell asleep.

I always thought I was numb to this kind of thing. Even during the years when my mom constantly hovered over me,

incidents still happened. Not another kidnapping—just getting separated from my mom at a department store during a mid-year sale. She was frantic, searching everywhere for me until she finally found me in the women’s restroom. After that, she insisted that I carry a phone with me at all times. It wasn’t really a big deal—she was just overreacting.

And now, at twenty-six, I don’t see a therapist regularly anymore. I live with my boyfriend, Angel, who I’ve been with since we were teenagers. I like taking pictures of myself. I like being naked—it’s part of my routine. That’s not unhealthy, at least not in my eyes. I like thinking about perfect beauty and letting myself obsess over it.

I drink two liters of water a day and coffee when I feel like it. I eat a proper breakfast, whatever I can find for lunch and skip dinner after 6 p.m. Sometimes I have a drink or two, carefully measured in ounces. I follow this routine every day, except on the days when I don’t.


On those days, I stay in the warm bathtub for hours until I’m sweating so much I feel like I might die. Those nights usually end with me hooked up to an IV drip in the hospital for two days.

Angel says I’m crazy. I don’t get mad at him for saying that. If he really wanted to break me, there are better ways to do it.

I’d just lie there on the bed, waiting for him to lean in with that pale serious face of his and tell me that I don’t love myself.

I always laugh and weakly lift my hand to tap his cheek.

“Don’t preach to me... Priest.”

A faint, light gray silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing left and looking upwards. The person has short, dark hair. The background is a very light, hazy landscape with a horizon line and some distant hills or mountains.

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# Adam of Eden

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I first met him in my early teenage years. Angel's real name was Adam.

Adam was looking at me through the mirror in Tully's room. Tully was my boyfriend at the time. I used to spend Saturday afternoons begging my mom to drop me off at a friend's house, claiming I had homework, just so I could walk two blocks to Tully's place and spend the afternoon tangled up on his bed. He wasn't handsome or romantic, but he made me laugh and the sex was good.

Tully kind of looked like a young Phillip Seymour Hoffman mixed with Jack Black. Not exactly attractive, but friendly and easygoing. Back then, I had strange tastes in men. I just wanted someone—anyone. He didn't have to be good-looking. He could be fat, short. It didn't matter. He didn't even need to be smart. I just wanted someone who wouldn't ask me questions like, “*What's wrong? You don't look so good,*” or “*What are you thinking?*”

*I like keeping my world private inside my head. I didn't want anyone prying into it. Everything about me was my business and there was no need to explain it to anyone.*

Adam was looking at me through the mirror. I was wearing nothing, but one of Tully's old off-white shirts, sitting on the bed with my back to the door, where Adam stood. I stared back at him, feeling no shame. The open neckline of the shirt revealed the curve

of my chest.

He blinked. For a moment, the scene was bathed in soft shades of orange and pale yellow—like a dream.

And then, after just a couple of breaths, Tully emerged from the bathroom.

“That’s not yours to look at,” Tully said before slamming the door in Adam’s face.

They were distant relatives, which explained why they had nothing in common. Tully was the son of a tattoo artist, the same one who inked a Circe butterfly on my wrist and a koi fish for my dad when he was still a teenager. Our fathers knew each other well.

Adam, on the other hand, was a half-Korean kid from the countryside—an outsider from a different town. After his mother, who raised him alone passed away, he had to move in with the only relatives he had left in Boston.

While Tully fit the mold perfectly, doing and being everything a city kid was supposed to while Adam was quiet and shy. At school, he probably fell into the category of kids no one noticed. A blank space in the yearbook. But I found him interesting in the way Tully once described him:

“He’s pretty devout.”

It had been a long time since I’d heard anyone use the word *devout*.

Curiosity got the better of me, so one day Tully and I snuck into Adam’s room, just to see what kind of person he was.

There was a cross hanging on the wall above a neatly made bed and a Bible sitting on the bookshelf next to a basic chemistry textbook, where you’d expect to see stacks of comic books. The floor was spotless without the usual mess of discarded underwear you’d expect in a teenage boy’s room.

Two years later, Adam became Angel—a dark angel—appearing in black on the day of Tully’s funeral.

That day was brutally hot. My dad told me about Tully’s

death after dinner, his voice flat and calm.

“Tully’s dead. Your friend.”

I raised my eyebrows. I didn’t feel particularly sad at the time. Tully and I had only dated for less than a year. Like I said, he wasn’t handsome or rich, but the problem with guys is usually other women. He had plenty of admirers—girls who thought he was cute and charming. We broke up on good terms. We stayed friends... The way it always happens on TV.

I went to Tully’s funeral with my dad. The burial started in the afternoon. It was scorching hot and the sun was blinding. The water running down my face wasn’t tears—it was sweat. The priest kept wiping his bald forehead with a handkerchief. The mourners fanned themselves, trying to keep cool.

Finally, Tully’s casket was lowered into the ground. I held my father’s hand before stepping away to find something cold to drink. I was starting to feel faint.

And that’s when I saw Adam again.

He took me to a Waffle House. We ordered iced green tea. I had never had green tea before and that became the first taste I remember—something that, even now, reminds me of him. For me, his scent and flavor will always be green tea.

Angel, or Adam, as he was still known back then sat across from me. He loosened his tie and told me he was working part-time there.

“Making waffles?” I asked casually. He smiled and nodded.

“And a few other things. What do you like to eat?”

“Cereal with milk,” I murmured, not really thinking. My body, still overheated from the afternoon sun felt strange under the cool blast of the air conditioning.

“One day, I’ll put it on the menu,” he laughed, understanding that I hadn’t given a serious answer.

“I don’t like sweets,” I said.

“That makes sense. I don’t like eating sweets either, but I like making them. Maybe you just haven’t found what you really

like yet.”

He wanted to be a chef. That’s what he told me. He said he would study culinary arts, learn as much as he could and one day open his own restaurant.

I listened to him talk about his dreams without asking, without really caring. My body felt off—something wasn’t right and it irritated me. My dad called, telling me to come home. And that was it.

Adam walked me to the church and I went home with my dad. I almost forgot I had ever met him. Shortly after that, I came down with pneumonia and nearly didn’t survive to see my seventeenth birthday.

My birthday was when I saw Adam again. The time when he would truly become my Angel. He knew my birthday from the last conversation he’d had with Tully when he was still alive.

Tully had wanted to give me a Puscifer jacket as a gift, but he never got the chance. Adam wasn’t trying to follow through on that intention as he didn’t even know who Puscifer was.

He called to wish me a happy birthday. My groggy voice made him assume I was sad about Tully’s death.

“Do you want some Black Forest cake?”

I didn’t understand the question at first. It was ten at night and I was still groggy from my mom’s magic pills. I made a vague sound in my throat. He told me he was parked downstairs in front of my apartment.

Before midnight, I had eaten two slices of cake. We sat on the hood of his car, looking at the lights of Cambridge across the bridge. Still in my pajamas, I turned to him and said:

“You’ll definitely make it as a chef.” It felt like I had to say something since I’d already eaten two slices of cake. But honestly, it was delicious. I could hardly believe he had made it all by himself.

It felt strange how neither of us mentioned Tully. He seemed indifferent about losing a family member. I felt the same way

about losing an ex-boyfriend. Just like the wind brushing over us now—it was indifferent too.

I wasn't even sure how I ended up out here in the middle of the night, eating cake and drinking soda with a guy I barely knew.

He just wanted to give me a birthday cake, Angel said.

He wanted to wish a happy birthday to a girl he didn't really know... I thought about my birthday at home. It wasn't any different from every other day. My mom came home from the gallery earlier than usual, made dinner and bought a dozen cupcakes from the same famous bakery like she always did. My dad was on call at the hospital, like always. I didn't feel neglected or unhappy. I just felt neutral about it, the way I always do on my birthday.

But tonight, there were two slices of homemade Black Forest cake sitting in my stomach and a boy who was practically a stranger sitting next to me, smiling at me.

*"Thanks for the cake,"* I told him sincerely.

His cake made me feel like this was actually a special day—the day I was born.

From then on, cake had become a dessert for celebrations.

I was Angel's girlfriend—a man full of talent.

When he had free time, he practiced cooking. I always felt honored to be the first to taste his food. Everything he made was delicious, from simple dishes I could have made myself (but never as good), to fancy, hard-to-pronounce dishes you'd expect from a high-end restaurant.

I had never met a guy his age who was as driven, charming or interesting as him.

That same year, I was scouted to become a model. I went to my first casting for an agency. A girl in the group casually remarked that I wasn't skinny enough.

Only God knows... From that day on, it was like I'd been cursed. No matter how little attention I paid to what other people

said, I started hating every mirror that reflected my arms and how big my butt looked.

“How much do you weigh that makes you think you’re fat?” Angel asked when I couldn’t stop obsessing over it.

I didn’t answer. I stood in front of the mirror, turning side to side, frustrated.

“I’ve seen real fat people before,” he said, rolling his eyes in exasperation.

“I know what fat looks like... And you’re definitely not it.”

“I don’t know... I think I’m fat.”

Angel sighed and went back to focusing on his work in the kitchen. I watched him cook, already imagining the taste on my tongue with the complexity and contradiction of flavors tormenting my mind.

I could never push away his food just because of someone else’s cruel words.

I smiled at him. We ate together and slowly, I began to figure things out. Eventually, I found a way to deal with my stress without having to reject the delicious things he made.

I was eighteen. I had succeeded in my first year as a model. And I had made a new close friend.

... *Bulimia.*

I lay in bed, listening to the rainfall near the balcony. Raindrops splashed against the window, driven by the wind. The world outside was gray and dark, like a giant wool sweater had been through over everything.

I hugged myself tightly, as if to keep the pieces of my body from coming apart and drifting away. I waited. And waited...

The room was dim. The sound of the rain had stopped and light from outside filtered through the top of the blinds covering the balcony door, casting lines across the ceiling. I was fully awake, startled not by the light or the darkness, but by a sound.

A soft sliding noise, followed by a dull thud as something

hit the floor.

I kept staring at the lines on the ceiling as footsteps approached. His face appeared above me, just a faint outline of dark hair and shadow.

“Is your spine made of foam?” His soft voice asked.

“It never hurts when I sleep on hard floors.”

My boy knelt down. His hand slid over my body, the touch through my clothes making my stomach tighten. He slipped his hand under my sweater, as if he knew that’s where I was vulnerable.

“Your hands are cold... Like porcelain,” I said.

He leaned down and finally, I saw his face, half bathed in soft light, the other half swallowed by shadow.

“And wet,” he said with a smile before burying his nose in the crook of my neck.

“The rain’s really coming down. Sorry I’m late, Reggie made me go to the club after.”

I tilted my head back, letting him touch me more deeply. “It’s fine. I didn’t even notice how long you were gone. I was asleep.”

“Good...” He let out a low sound from his throat, his body apparently convinced that my spine really was made of foam. The pressure and rhythm of his movements left me in agony rather than pleasure.

To be honest, I probably shouldn’t have pulled him away from the peaceful, ordinary life of a teenage boy. The life where he could have grown up to become a priest and preached about the virtues of monogamy. Or maybe I should have taught him how to treat a woman properly. The kind of way that only exists in those dreamy, old-fashioned romance films.

After we were done, the skin on my arm was lined with marks, like the weave of the wool sweater I was wearing. I ran my fingers over them and called his name.

“Angel.” I pointed to the ugly marks on my skin.

He shrugged. His naked body stepped into the bathtub.

“It’ll fade soon enough,” he murmured, nodding for me to join him.

I pulled off my sweater and tossed it into the laundry basket. Steam had fogged up the mirror, making my reflection almost impossible to see.

I lowered myself into the water. He wrapped his arms around me.

“Sorry... I forgot I need to be gentle with you. Your skin is so delicate.”

He laughed as he spoke, his tone dripping with sarcasm. I rolled my eyes as he kissed my shoulder, the skin marked with the pattern of twisted rope.

“We have a bed, you know. High-quality linen sheets. Even the satin ones that’s so smooth,” I said, sighing.

“Well, we could always go another round...” He said casually before gently pushing me away. I leaned back on the other side of the bathtub, watching him dry his hands before pulling a book off the nearby shelf.

Soaking in the tub and reading—that was his idea of relaxation, more than sex or sleep.

I watched him as I sipped wine from a tall glass, feeling myself drift toward sleep. I got up to rinse off. But even the short distance from the tub to the shower almost made me stop to rest on the tile floor. I leaned against the shower glass as the warm spray washed over me.

“Don’t fall asleep just yet,” he called out. “The linen’s waiting for you.”

I snorted through my nose like a cow before heading back to the bedroom. Forget linen sheets. I couldn’t care less. I changed into my pajamas and slipped under the blanket.

Our bedroom had a soft peach-colored light, which I liked, but he didn’t. He said it kept him awake, made him feel like he was staying at a hotel. He preferred harsh, bright light from the reading lamp next to the bed or complete darkness.

I was the opposite. I could never sleep in total darkness. It had been that way since I was a child. Sometimes I'd wake up and find the room completely dark, maybe because of a power outage or something. It would unsettle me so much that I couldn't sleep. I would lie awake, waiting until the light returned before I could drift off again.

It's strange as I've always felt like darkness is a heavy object pressing down on my eyes and chest. My all-knowing mother once told me I have a mild form of nyctophobia—a fear of the dark.

Come to think of it, it's not that serious. It's just that I feel uneasy when I can't see the things around me, that's all.

*I closed my eyes and saw myself lying inside a dark, narrow box like a coffin. And suddenly, a thin line of light appeared. It widened and grew brighter until it filled the entire space. A figure stood there. Someone pulled me out and took me somewhere new. I saw Doreen...*

I jolted awake, eyes snapping open. Angel was flipping his pillow over. He raised an eyebrow, looking at me.

"I had a dream," I murmured, rubbing the space between my brows.

"Just now? That was only a few minutes," he said, lying back down with his head resting on his arm, watching me. I nodded. "Was it scary?"

"Not exactly..." I replied, my throat dry. "Just a dream about when I was kidnapped."

I had told him about it a long time ago. He didn't really react—just said "Oh" or "Wow" or something vague enough that I couldn't tell how he actually felt about the story. Maybe he didn't believe me or maybe he just didn't know what to say.

"Does this happen to you often?"

I shook my head again. It was true.

"It's nothing serious. It's just that today... You know what? Do you remember the girl I told you about? The one who was with

me when I was kidnapped?" He nodded.

"I saw her today. She's a model too."

Angel lay back on the bed and murmured, "That's... Strange." That was all he said. He didn't ask anything else and I didn't feel like explaining either. I shifted closer to him and he opened his arms to pull me in. Our linen sheets would have to wait a little longer.

He yawned. Proof that his day had been just as exhausting as mine.

"Wasn't it scary to see her again?" He asked after a long silence.

"It's not worrying you, right? The dream... Or seeing her again?"

I lifted my head to look at him, searching for my own feelings at that moment. The kidnapping was like a thin veil blowing somewhere far away. And like I said, it hasn't unsettled me since it happened. What felt even stranger was what had happened today—a girl I never thought I'd see again suddenly standing right in front of me.

But even so... That was it. We might never see each other again.

I shook my head and kissed Angel goodnight.

I still keep my apartment, even though I don't really need to. I'm not the type of person to prepare for every possible scenario, but it doesn't hurt to keep a place to crash in case things with Angel ever go south. Not that we've ever had a serious fight—not once. Sometimes, I'd drop by to spend the night. Other times I'd just stop by to clean up.

It's a narrow street where you'd never expect to find decent apartments hidden away. I love letting myself look scruffy on my days off, walking to the laundromat late at night, carrying a bag of dirty clothes. I'd pass some of the late-night crowd—a businessman with a hard-edged briefcase glanced at me once before walking

briskly away.

After loading the laundry, I stood there watching my own reflection in the glass. Looking at me, you wouldn't have guessed what I did for a living. Since I couldn't smoke while waiting, I sat down on an old couch with worn-out cushions that offered no comfort.

A young man sat down nearby, keeping a polite distance. He smelled faintly of fabric softener. We made brief eye contact. I adjusted my glasses and picked up a thin book.

It was about the lives of some farmers, a story about an improper relationship. The title was interesting, but in my opinion, the story itself wasn't very engaging. It was good enough to kill time, though. I had picked it up from Angel's shelf a long time ago.

The clock on the pillar in front of me ticked unevenly, the sound of its second hand dragging slightly. Tick... Tick... An almost hypnotic pulse that got under my skin.

I slipped my finger between the pages to mark my place about halfway through.

"I'm going to get some coffee," the young man beside me said.

I turned to him, surprised by the sudden conversation. After a moment's silence, he added: "Do you want one?"

"No, thanks," I replied, giving a polite smile. We stood up at the same time as he headed out the door while I walked over to check the machine.

On top of the pile was a wrinkled white t-shirt. I remembered wearing it the other day and getting it stained. I picked it up and there it was, the same faint red stain from spaghetti sauce.

Frustrated, I rubbed at it, even though the shirt was already dry.

The skin on my left index-finger snagged and peeled back painfully. I didn't really care. I stuffed the shirt into the bag and returned to the couch. The book I had been reading was gone.

I shrugged. It wasn't that interesting anyway.

A faint, light gray silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing left and looking upwards. The person has short, dark hair. The background is a very light, hazy landscape with a horizon line and some distant hills or mountains.

Elite Creative Literary Agency

# Doreen

.....

It was one of those days when I was bored with everything...

I wandered aimlessly through the lobby of Doll's House Agency, the agency I was signed with. The place was decorated with pastel-colored plastic furniture and fixtures, making it feel like a literal dollhouse. And I was just another doll living in it.

There was an issue with a check—I'm not really sure why. I don't come here often unless I have to. Most of our contact happens over the phone or through emails. After settling the payment issue, I wasn't sure where to go.

Lately, I've had more free time than usual. That means less money, but more time for myself. I drifted down the street, my eyes skimming over coffee shops, thinking about pies, milk and pastries stuffed with all kinds of fillings. My stomach growled like thunder, but when I finally stepped into my regular spot, all I ordered was a black coffee and an oatmeal cookie.

And it was during one of these sluggish, aimless moments Doreen, or Daliz Luel as she goes by now, reached out to me again.

A text popped up on my phone screen:

"Miss you."

And a location.

Honestly, shouldn't I be scared? She could have lured me there. She might have inherited her father's tendencies. But instead of worrying, I found it exciting. My heart was racing the entire

way there, eager to meet her at the agreed spot.

Doreen—what can I say? I’m too used to calling her that rather than Daliz Luel. She could have easily been a reincarnated angel. I loved her pale blonde hair, soft and glossy. That platinum shade was striking, making her face look bright and luminous. Her rose-pink lips and flushed cheeks gave her a fresh, lively charm.

She introduced me to Sean, her boyfriend, who had been quietly observing my arrival. He only moved when I extended my hand and said *Nice to meet you*.

His hand was soft, his grip light. His voice was low and smooth, easy on the ears. He looked at me through vintage-framed glasses, his softly layered bob making his face look effortlessly cool—elegant and understated. Not overly masculine, not stereotypically gay. Just neutral in a way that felt natural.

“I’ve heard a lot about you.”

That’s all he said, leaving the rest for me to figure out. I glanced at Doreen. Her sly smile gave nothing away—what exactly had she told him about me? Did he know about the strange way we first met? But honestly, I didn’t really care.

I sat down across from the couple. Sean lowered his head, continuing to write with his left hand. A waiter approached and my mouth ordered coffee before my brain even processed it.

“Sean writes screenplays,” Doreen whispered, though there was no need to. Sean didn’t even react.

“That’s an interesting career,” I said, because I couldn’t think of anything else to say. Sean almost smiled—but not quite. He cast a cold look my way, then lowered his head and kept writing. His hand trembled slightly around the pen before, with a sudden resolve, he slammed the notebook shut with a loud snap.

“Since your friend is here, I should get going,” he said, standing up. He leaned down and kissed Doreen’s waiting lips, whispering something that made her smile.

“Sorry if I startled you,” Doreen said after Sean had left. I raised an eyebrow.

"I got your number from the Dolls Agency," she admitted. "I used to work at the same place as you, so it wasn't hard."

"Oh... It's fine. It's good to see you again."

She looked at me, surprised.

"Really? You mean that? You don't think I'm crazy like my father?"

Your father... It was the first time either of us had formally mentioned that key figure from our past. So she was admitting it too. Admitting that he was unhinged. A kidnapper. Strangely, I laughed as I asked about him, my tone sounding more like I was asking after a concerned relative.

Doreen's expression went blank. Her smile suddenly faded as she explained that her father had vanished from their home. One day, she came home from school and he was simply... Gone. No one knew if he was dead or alive.

"... I grew up in an orphanage. I was thirteen at the time. A foster family took me in for a while." She twisted her lips, looking disgusted by whatever memory she couldn't put into words. Then she concluded, "Some people are just meant to be orphans, I guess."

I didn't know what to say, so I stirred my coffee with a spoon, watching the soft shimmer of the glittery pink polish on her nails as it caught the light.

"I'm sorry..." The words slipped out before I could stop them. It might have been intrusive but I wanted to know. "Was he your real father?"

She lifted her teacup and grinned faintly over the rim.

"My mother died after she married him."

Stepfather... Orphanage, foster care. I didn't even try to imagine what Doreen had gone through. It probably wasn't anything beautiful. All I could do was sigh quietly.

"You've probably seen one of Sean's films... *Lawrence Hills*." She was the one to change the subject.

I tilted my head, trying to remember. "Sounds familiar, but

I don't think I've seen it. What's it about?"

Doreen described the story of a young girl who grew up in a trailer. Her family drifted around like a traveling circus. The entire movie revolved around their life on the road, meeting all sorts of strange and colorful people along the way. Eventually, the story ends when their trailer breaks down in a place called Lawrence Hills. By that point, the girl has matured and longs to settle down somewhere—anywhere, because she no longer wants to live a wandering life.

"Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? But I'm proud of the fact that the film screened at Sundance and a few other festivals too. The critics really loved it. It put his work on the map."

I smiled at her story. Personally, I had never felt proud of anything in my life. I had always been an ordinary person, born without any particular drive or ambition. My mom, the perfect woman that she was, never failed to criticize me for that.

*"Is there really nothing you truly want to do besides modeling?"* My brilliant mother once asked. I just stared blankly at her and shook my head. My dad thought it was funny and told her not to push me. He had always been kinder to me.

Back then, I still hadn't finished high school, so I figured that once I graduated, I'd figure it out. But even now, I still don't know what I really want to do.

I became a model because I had the opportunity and I was good at it. I'm not at the top of the industry anymore, but it's still a job that other girls envy. They have no idea how stressful and competitive it is.

My life revolves around work and travel, falling asleep on planes or in hotel rooms. I shouldn't worry so much about having less work and making less money. Maybe it would even be a relief to have time to sleep, to eat, to gain a few pounds without feeling anxious about it. But I can't let it go. I'm getting older. I'm not in demand the way I used to be. Slowly but surely, I'm being pushed aside and there's nothing I can do about it.

Doreen and I didn't sit and talk for long. She suggested we keep eating, but I just sat there and lied, saying I'd already eaten, even though all I'd had was a single cookie and coffee with artificial sweetener. When Doreen's order arrived, it was time to part ways.

I hugged her tightly, like we were old friends who had known each other forever. Her touch felt strangely familiar. It's odd that our shared past didn't come back to haunt me. On the contrary, it felt like I'd been waiting for this reunion for a very long time.

"Can I ask you something?" She said as she pulled away from me. "Please don't call me Doreen. Even if you're used to it."

That name reminded her of her father. That's what Doreen said.

I wouldn't go against her wishes, but I couldn't help wondering, if I slipped up and called her Doreen again... Would she be angry?

I was shooting for a magazine—a studio shoot. The makeup artist was someone I knew well and she brought along a new assistant, probably an intern. He was tall and lean, good-looking enough that I first thought he might be one of the models.

That day, the creative team had transformed me into some kind of Greek goddess mixed with a disco queen. I let them dress me up like a doll while they fussed around me. The young makeup artist politely asked for permission before doing anything to my face. How polite. I was being paid to sit there as a blank canvas and he was being paid to paint me. Why the hesitation? I gave him a small smile, but his nervousness made his hand slip and a fleck of glittery eyeshadow fell into my eye.

It was just a tiny bit, but since I was wearing contact lenses, it instantly became a big problem. My eye started stinging and I could barely keep it open.

"Can I take out my contact lens first? God, this hurts."

I wasn't trying to make a scene, but the senior makeup artist immediately started scolding the poor guy. Then, through my own clumsiness... I felt my heart sink—my contact lens slipped off my fingertip. I can't wear just one lens, which meant I was about to become a half-blind model.

The irritation made my eyes water uncontrollably. I dabbed at my tears, afraid of ruining my makeup. But no matter how carefully I wiped my face, the reality remained: I couldn't see clearly from one eye. The flurry of apologies didn't make things any better.

"Alright, is the model ready?" A voice drifted over. It was the fashion editor. He asked what happened and I told him straight.

"We'll just retouch the redness in post," the photographer said with a smile as I settled into place, already dressed and made up.

"Smile! Don't worry... I've got this," he said, flashing me a playful grin from behind the camera. I couldn't help but laugh.

"That's it... Beautiful."

I squeezed my eyes shut for a moment, trying to regain focus before striking a series of poses—changing outfits and accessories over and over again. I forced myself to believe that everything was fine, even as I stared into the camera with blurred vision.

"Hang in there," he said, stepping forward to gently adjust my shoulder.

"Turn this way... No... Yes, that's it. Lift your chin a bit... Beautiful."

I wondered what the world would be like without cleansing oil... That was the only thought in my head as I got ready to go home. Even after washing off my makeup, I couldn't shake the feeling that my skin was still dirty. I worried that a lifetime of lining my eyes with black eyeliner might eventually make me go blind one day.

A knock on the door, two to three knocks. What now? They

had already packed up all the fantasy clothes.

"Yes, come in," I called out, tying up my hair. Through the mirror, I saw a tall, tanned man step inside.

"Grace, right?" It was the photographer. I smiled at him through the reflection.

"Yes."

"I'm Franz, the photographer. You can still see, right?"

"Yes," I laughed. "Not completely blind yet. Nice to meet you."

We shook hands and I couldn't help but wonder if it was some kind of tradition for photographers to introduce themselves to the models after the shoot was over.

"Nice to meet you. I just... Thought I'd stop by and say hi as a neighbor, you know."

I stared at him, confused, my expression clearly showing my uncertainty.

"Yeah, we met at that 24-hour laundromat. You were reading Eugene O'Neill's novel..."

That's when it clicked. He followed up by reminding me that he'd offered to get me a coffee, but I had turned him down.

"Ah right! That was you at the laundromat. I'm sorry... I didn't recognize you."

"You were wearing glasses that day because you were reading. Guess the book was more interesting than I was."

Once he was sure I'd remembered, he pulled up a chair and sat down across from me.

Curious, I leaned forward slightly to get a better look at him as we spoke.

"That book's not really a novel... It's more of a play," I blurted out.

*What the hell am I talking about? Social skills deficiency?*

Yes, I have that. I pulled back, thinking I'd made him uncomfortable. His expression confirmed it—he shrugged.

"I only saw the title and the author's name on the cover.

Sorry, I assumed it was a novel. I'm clueless about books."

"You're not clueless. I don't read much either, to be honest. That one was pretty boring. But unfortunately, it wasn't even mine... And I think I lost it."

Our conversation was interrupted by someone letting me know that my ride, my "royal carriage" (or close enough, considering the yellow color) was waiting. I stood up to leave and shook his hand again. He hadn't mentioned his last name and I hadn't asked. All I knew was that he lived in my neighborhood, had blue eyes... I think. A nice voice with a faint British accent and was pretty good-looking.

"Hopefully we'll see each other around."

The light from the fixture above the mirror cast his standing figure in dark, sharp contrast. I raised my hand in a small wave.

"Maybe... If you're still around."

I wasn't sure if that sounded like I was flirting, but it was better than what some of my friends would've done, like asking for his number outright. (And for the record, those friends all have boyfriends).

Sometimes I feel like I'm too old-fashioned for this world. Maybe I've read too many Jane Austen novels. Not that I could ever be Elizabeth Bennet.

## About the Author



The author of *The Lost Fairy* is a dreamer by nature and works in finance by day. Outside of work, she writes stories filled with the supernatural, imaginative love and unreal worlds. She's just as fascinated by the hidden corners of the human psyche, which continue to shape her stories, even when writing about ordinary people.

A lifelong reader, she writes whenever she can, even in brief moments. She loves imagining plotlines and exploring the diversity of humans in all their complexity. Her fiction features vivid characters with unexpected personalities or mysterious pasts. The settings are grand and fantastical, yet grounded in real emotion, capturing life's ache, its beauty and its chaos.

Her favorite stories are the kind that offer escape on the surface, but between the lines, carry healing, hope and courage. She doesn't believe in unhappy endings. Her stories always lead to light.

She currently works in financial management at a public university in Thailand and writes under the pen names Chanintron and Capplepye. Her work isn't confined to romance or drama and it embraces characters of all identities and preferences.

She continues to write in the style she loves, living with the person she loves, in a small garden behind the house. Her writing desk is somewhere in the northeast of Thailand.

Welcome to the inner world of a woman...  
... a woman who may be hidden within you, within us,  
in this world of illusions.

Before we can tell what's real and what's not...  
... we may lose our way—so far there's no turning back.  
Both you and I.

Follow her...  
Until the heart finds that small, steady light...

# The Lost Fairy



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