

## The Astral Architect

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The Astral Architect

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## Introduction

The lights of Sydney were a nightly mockery, a relentless, glittering taunt. From the cramped, single-pane window of his shared room in Harris Park, Chunmun Singh could see the distant, arrogant towers of the CBD. They were cold, diamond-hard shards piercing an indigo sky, beacons of a wealth that devoured dreams whole, reflecting a life he could see but never touch. Down here, the light was a sickly, flickering yellow from a single bare bulb. It was a jaundiced, buzzing light that illuminated the drab beige walls, the cracks in the ceiling, and the steam rising from a cup of instant ramen. The air, thick with the scent of synthetic chicken flavour and the heavy, rhythmic snoring of his roommate, Nitin Seth, was a constant, suffocating reminder of his reality.

"One day, Chun... one day," Nitin had mumbled before sleep, crushing a losing lottery ticket in his fist. "Just one lucky ticket. It's the only way out of this hole."

Chunmun had just nodded, the scent of Nitin's cheap beer-breath mingling with the salty steam of his own dinner. His reality was 2000 AUD a month, a salary that evaporated against the sheer, crushing gravity of Sydney's cost of living. It was a life measured in instant noodles and the faint, ever-present scent of mould from the shared bathroom. From the street below, the *thwack* of a cricket bat from a distant television broadcast mingled with the faint, tinny sound of Bollywood music and the rich, complex aroma of cumin

and asafoetida from a neighbouring apartment. It was a pocket of home, transplanted and struggling, just like him.

For two decades, Chunmun had walked a parallel path. While his colleagues at Baba Bank chased promotions, property, and the validation of their peers, he pursued Raja Yoga. His worn, navy-blue mat, smelling faintly of sandalwood from a long-extinguished incense stick and the salt of his own sweat, was his only true possession. It was his escape vehicle. He sought not just enlightenment, but a literal escape from the grinding poverty, from the bone-deep, aching loneliness. A girlfriend was an impossible luxury; no woman could fit into a budget that barely stretched to cover rice, rent, and his train pass. His poverty was a physical weight, a heavy, damp coat he could never take off. His yoga was the key to shrugging it off, if only for a few hours.

He had achieved a rare *siddhi*: the ability to consciously, willfully, detach his *Manomaya Kosha*—the mental and emotional sheath—from the heavy, fleshly *Annamaya Kosha* (the physical body) and the energetic *Pranamaya Kosha* (the life-force sheath).

Tonight, he sat. The city's distant roar—a blend of sirens, the growl of buses, and the far-off, thumping bass of music from a car—faded into a dull hum. The scent of synthetic ramen gave way to the clean, cool stillness of his own breath. He focused, inhaling the cool air, exhaling the day's frustrations. He found the point of stillness behind his eyes, a familiar, pulling sensation, like a gentle, internal vortex. Then, the *pop*. It was not a sound, but a *feeling*—a cool, silver severing, a sudden, exhilarating release of pressure.

He was light. His physical body, a hollow, breathing shell, slumped on the mat, oblivious. His ethereal form, a shimmering, barely-visible ripple in the air, a distortion in the yellow lamplight, drifted

up. He phased through the ceiling, a strange, tingling rush, like plunging his hand into a bowl of static. He shot into the night air. The wind screamed past his astral senses, a soundless symphony, a pure, kinetic joy.

Below, Sydney was a river of white and red headlights, a vast, electric jewel splayed on black velvet. He soared over the dark, sleeping sprawl of the suburbs, a silent god in the altitude. He banked, tasting the cold, thin air of the upper atmosphere, and glided over the Harbour Bridge, a magnificent steel web gleaming under the moonlight. He could slip through walls, a ghost of pure thought, and observe the secret, unguarded lives of others. He could stir the air, a focused needle of his will, creating gusts to rattle windows and spill drinks, a poltergeist with a purpose.

Yet, this power felt useless, a cosmic joke. He was a king of an invisible kingdom, but a pauper in the physical world. His only court was the chaotic, simmering drama of his team at Baba Bank. Eight women and four men, a swirling vortex of ambition, deceit, and desire. He knew them all, more intimately than they knew themselves.

He drifted, hanging suspended in the cold, silent dark, and let them file through his mind. Khusbu Grewal, her desperation a sour, cloying scent of wilted flowers and visa applications. Priya Sharma, who masked her infertility pain with layers of sharp, floral, expensive perfume. Priyanka Ghose, a silent, grey shadow of ambition, her aura as cold and scentless as glass. Anisa Bose, whose whispers carried the acrid, metallic tang of rumour and gossip. Rashmi Bongi, the manager, who smelled of stale, expensive wine and predatory power. Sumitri, whose digital seductions glowed with the cold, blue light of a dozen screens. Puju, juggling hearts, leaving a confused trail of two different colognes,

one spicy, one clean. Sadha Sahu, her rage a hot, burning, volcanic red. And the men: Gorabha, her husband, reeking of guilt and Rashmi's heavy perfume. Gobi Khan, a collector, his aura stained with a dozen fleeting, musky, cheap scents. Kunil Sharma, his lies smelling of cheap beer and the sweet, artificial fruitiness of Bumble dates. Logesh, his grudge a cold, hard stone in his chest.

Chunmun's astral voyages, once tools for spiritual insight, had become sessions of subtle, karmic justice. He was the unseen force that made a bully's laptop crash, the sudden gust that blew incriminating papers into the open. As he hung suspended above the glittering, sleeping city, a new thought solidified, cold and practical. This grinding poverty had to end. He pondered his gift. Psychic consulting? Paranormal entertainment? He was tired of ramen. He was tired of being invisible. He pictured a tacky, buzzing neon sign: *CHUNMUN SINGH: PSYCHIC SOLUTIONS*. He scoffed, but the idea, once planted, began to grow. He didn't know it yet, but unraveling the neon-lit, perfume-soaked, whispered webs of his colleagues would be the first step to building his own empire. Hindi translation has been provided at the end of the book.

## **Chapter 1: Khusbu Grewal - The Obsessive Admirer**

The 8:00 AM meditation was Chunmun's sanctuary, the one hour he carved out for sanity. In their drab room, Nitin Seth had already left for a cash job, leaving behind the lingering scent of cheap, minty deodorant and burnt toast. Chunmun sat on his navy-blue mat, breathing in the relative quiet, seeking the cool, internal darkness of his practice. But the silence was polluted. For weeks, his *sadhana* had been hijacked, invaded by flashes of unwanted, visceral light and sound. It was a psychic stain he couldn't scrub from his mind.