

# MALAI

Story of my secret lover

A short story by Khmerbird

"I like it.

It's very fresh, realistic, and contemporary."

- Professor Teri Shaffer YAMADA,

Editor of Virtual Lotus: Modern Fiction of Southeast Asia

## Malai – Story of my secret lover

a short story by Khmerbird

Imagine there was a young beautiful girl. She came to you. You slept with her as you slept with any other woman. There was no difference. With a lot of alcohol in your brain, you couldn't see any difference. You did it exactly as you had done it a thousand times before.

But for her, it was her very first time. You just realized when you woke up, there was blood in your bed. What would you do?

I'm a businessman. My father is a businessman. What kind of other job do you expect me to do? Once your father is a businessman, you have to become a businessman. This is a ridiculous family tradition. Nobody can change it. And it became the slogan that we always said to foreigners: **You don't come here to change Cambodia; after two years Cambodia will change you.**

I had just gotten back from France. I missed the perfume of the French girls. But I missed home too, especially my Mum. She's the most beautiful mother in the world. I couldn't make her wait for me again and again.

After 7 years in France, I came back to take over my father's business. I was 25 years old. He gave me an office, a car and two bodyguards. I never liked the idea of having those guys around. He insisted. He said it was necessary; when you are rich in a poor country, you could be the target of a kidnaper for money. I believe him. I don't know how much I hate this; but I still help my father do business. It's like the story of "The Godfather". We have families and a lot of people's lives depend on us. Since you live your life for others, it's rare for you to get a chance to live your own life. But there's nothing for you to complain about. At the end of the day, there's always a way to live your own life.

Our company runs all kinds of businesses: hotels, banks, restaurants. We serve as business consultants and set up companies. We welcome all investors who want to do business in Cambodia. We help them with all the administrative, regulative and legal issues. They just come, sign a contract with us, transfer the money into our account, and tomorrow they have their company. We share the benefit. That's what I admire about my father. He built the connection. In country like this you got to know people. You give them what they need they give you back what you need. The rest is the money.

I've watched "Scarface", but I've never imagined that those things are really true. It was just only *The American Dream*, until Malai came to my life. It was exactly like Tony said: "This country, you gotta make the money first. Then when you get the money, you get the power. Then when you get the power, then you get the women."

Malai came to me with her own will. I don't know how long she'd been watching over me. I often have business dinners at the club where Malai works, however I've never paid any attention to her. One night she came and sat next to me while I was having dinner with some Koreans who had just come to Cambodia and were looking to do business with us. I wanted to entertain them a little bit. I could not believe what heavy drinkers they were. There were just four people and me. We finished four bottles of Whisky, and they still could walk.

They kept saying:

- “Kampae ... Kampae ...” (meaning “cheers” in Korean)

I said back to them:

- “Take care your own girl! So that she doesn’t walk away from you.”

I was drunk. When I woke up I saw a girl sleeping next to me. It’s just an ordinary thing in this world. There’s nothing strange about it. It always happens to me. Most of the time, I don’t even remember whom I’ve slept with the other nights. As usual after a night of heavy drinking, I feel thirsty after waking up in the morning. My insides are burning. I need some cold water to cool me down. I got up, turned on the light and went to the fridge for a cold bottle of water. As I was walking back to my bed, I saw the beautiful figure of a girl's body, covered by a thin blanket, sleeping comfortably on my bed by the look on her face. She was still in a deep sleep. Maybe she was dreaming of something. She looked so young, I started to realize. I sat down in the bed as I looked at her face closer, she looked so lovable. I pulled off the blanket. I wanted to see the mystery of the world.

She woke up, pulled herself away from me to the other side of the bed. Then she quickly covered herself and hid back under the blanket. She might be shy I guessed.

I smiled to her and said:

- “That’s OK! I am just kidding.”

I got up wanting to go to the bathroom but then I started to realize something. There was something on the bedsheet that she just moved, something was red as blood. I believed it was blood. I asked myself where the hell that blood came from. My body was shaking, sweat cover my body. I swear to god, I’ve never been as scared as that morning. I felt like I had fallen down from the sky.

I started to remember what happened last night. I brought her here to this room. I took a bath. I also asked if she wanted to have a bath together. She said no. I thought this girl might be shy. I left her alone and she took the bath just after me. I remembered I went to knock on the door of the bathroom many times. She kept me waiting so long in the empty bed. Finally she came out but she really didn’t know where to start.

I wondered:

- Are you sick or something?

She said:

- No,

I didn’t understand why she had to react that way. I asked:

- Then why? You don’t want to do it?

She asked me to turn off the light. I was the one who started everything. I started to remember. The more I thought, the more my body was trembling.

I asked her many times:

- What is this? What is this?

I asked her so many times as I became more scared. It was coming deep inside me. I felt like I had done something very wrong. It was terrible. She moved quickly to hide the blood with her blanket. I was waiting for her answer. She had to say something. I was completely depressed and impatient.

My heart beat so fast, I asked her:

- Is it your first time? How old are you?

She remained calm; her silence was totally killing me. Luckily it didn't last too long.

She started to give my life back when she said:

- 18, I was 18 yesterday...

I said:

- 18? You got an ID? What's your name? You work in the club, right?

She said:

- No, I don't have ID, but tomorrow I can make one if you want...

I continued:

- OK, So you work in club right? What's your name?

She looked down and told me her name:

- Malai ...

I continued:

- Malai, what are you doing? What are you doing here ...?

I couldn't find the right words to say. It was more than words; there were no words to express exactly how I felt at that time.

- Don't worry! I know what I am doing (she replied).

I quickly replied:

- Oh, you know what you are doing. You know it? Are you sure you know what you are doing?  
Oh Jesus Christ!

I was in a panic and I just laughed. I don't know why... I laughed a while so that my fear dissipated.

I thought she might need money, I asked her:

- What do you want from me?

She looked at me with her gentle eyes and said:

- Nothing,

I couldn't believe it, I said to her:

- Nothing? You do this for nothing? Come on! How much do you want?

She looked away from me and said:

- I don't want to go home.

I asked:

- What happened? Why don't you want to go home?

She answered me with her sad voice:

- I hate my brother, he hit me.

I started to be curious about what happened to her, I asked:

- Why did he hit you?

She continued:

- He needs money ... he needs money for buying drugs, pills ... gambling. I don't want to see him anymore. I am scared.

But she might not know how much I was scared at that time. I told her:

- Well... You make me scared too...

She looked at me. She started to stare at me and I liked her when she stared at me like that. I felt something. There's nobody who stared at me like that before. She seemed a little bit happy when she saw me panic.

I couldn't let her be happy like that, I asked her:

- What you want me to do?

My question stopped her definitively from smiling. She started to look seriously at me. She was about to say something but she hesitated. She was about to talk but she couldn't speak. I remembered that look. It was exactly the same look in my mother's eyes when I left her to live in Paris. But how this girl has such sentimental feelings for me? I've just met her. I just knew her yesterday.

That look told me that she had many things to say to me. But why she didn't say anything? I couldn't understand. I waited for an explanation.

But she finally gave up everything. She didn't say a word, she just asked:

- Can I live here for a while?

I didn't really get what she meant. I asked her back:

- You mean in this room? You want to stay at this hotel?

She replied:

- Yes, Can you pay for me?

If it was only that, she saved my day. I told her:

- Sure, sure there's no problem, you can stay as long as you want.

I waited to hear if she would need something else. But she didn't ask for anything else.

I asked for her confirmation:

- That's all?

She replied with an expression as if ignoring me:

- Yes, that's all.

I insisted on asking her:

- That's all? You don't want to see the doctor or something?

She forced herself to smile and replied:

- No I am OK. Can I go to the bathroom? I want to go to the bathroom.

I knew I couldn't make her stay any longer, even one more minute. I told her:

- Sure, sure... go ahead.

She went into the bathroom. I dressed up and I put my business card and credit card on the table. I wrote down the pin number for her. I couldn't stay any longer in that hotel room. It made me sick. I took the bloody bedsheet and left the room. I told Phy, my bodyguard, to take it and go to see a doctor just to make sure it's real blood.

Phy, who had never seen me with such a long face, he asked:

- What is that boss? You forget the number one I gave you? Ah?

I assured him:

- No, no I never forget your number one. I still got plenty in my pocket and in my wallet. But just go and tell me if it's a real blood.

He seemed happy with my reply and said:

- No problem boss.

I waited for the phone call from Phy. I couldn't take any breakfast, even coffee; it was all turning cold. I couldn't eat or drink anything. I went to my office. I closed the door. I didn't want to see anybody. I just waited for a phone call. Phy rang me and he said: "it's a real blood boss, she's a virgin!"

Oh shit! felt like death. I couldn't sit. I couldn't walk. I couldn't tell anybody in my office or family. I called my friends. I don't care if they were working or had any important meeting. They had to cancel everything. I needed to talk.

- She's crazy

Borin said after listening to me and knowing all the details about what happened last night.

Sangha added:

- She is playing a game. She is like "My Sassy Girl". You remember My Sassy Girl, a Korean movie.

I warned to Sangha:

- Stop playing with me please, it's not the right moment.

Sangha started to be serious:

- Ok, Ok ... maybe she just needs to be away from home for a while.

I didn't agree with his idea:

- You think? You think she did all these things just to be a way from home for a while? It's insane man, it's insane!

Borin asked me:

- You know how long she spied on you in that club?

I replied to him:

- I don't know! I never pay attention. But everybody knows me at that club. She's probably planned this for a long time.

Sangha, he never stops playing around:

- Ha ha ha ... you are caught! Don't move!

Borin asked for confirmation about the blood:

- She's a virgin? The blood is real?

I thought I had already told him. I confirmed it again to him:

- Yes, the blood is real.

Borin still didn't believe I'd slept with a virgin girl:

- Are you sure? It is not a fake? You know these days they could make anything become real, it can be made like the first time. You know what I mean?

I confirmed again to him:

- Yes, I know. I checked with the doctor; it's the blood of the virgin girl. What do you want me to check more?

Borin started to get something in his mind:

- Ok, Ok so you are sure it's real. I think she might be having some difficulties with her brother or her family. She's been having a bad time. You know, she is young when she is unhappy; she can do anything, just anything crazy like that.

I still insisted that it didn't happen just coincidentally; it came from her will.

I said:

- You know she didn't feel any regret in the morning. I felt like I am being manipulated.

Borin gave his reflection:

- What does she want from you? Why did she do this? She didn't ask you for anything?

I replied back to him:

- I don't know ... maybe she needs money. But she hasn't said it yet.

Sangha, after listening to both of us, he started to express his crazy idea:

- I think she likes you,

Sangha showed me the front page of Southeastern Globe, where they'd put my picture as a young success businessman.

Sangha continued:

- You see this man? He is young, handsome and rich. Who doesn't have a crush on him? I agree that she planned this. Oh man, you are dead this time.

It's unbelievable! I shouted at him:

- Stop it! I am not that handsome, brilliant Brad Pitt.

Sangha still continued his arguments:

- Of course you are! My sister also has a crush on you, she told me so...

Sangha, he really wanted me to kick his ass.

Borin gave his conclusion:

- Look, I don't care if she got the plan or she is just confused. You slept with a virgin, I couldn't understand how this could happen, but for sure right now, she didn't ask you anything right?

Calm down, you just go home and forget it. Let's see what happens, OK? Just go home or back to work, do your things and see what happens.

Just forget it!

I did as Borin advised. I went to work as usual. I have been waiting for one week. There has been no phone call or any abuse of my credit card. What was she doing? I couldn't pretend any longer. I called to the hotel. They said she was still there. They said sometime she went shopping, but most of the time she stayed at the hotel.

But how long will she stay there?

I can't just forget it. I wanted to understand how this thing could happen. I remembered someone said when you get lost, go to the source. I went to the club. I asked for the manager there. She was also one of the people I know. If I need women for entertaining my clients I go to see her. She knew exactly what to do.

I warned the manager:

- She's a minor. You employed a minor. It's illegal you know?

She refused to take any responsibility:

- She told me she was 20.

I asked her back:

- Did you check her ID?

The manager:

- She said she didn't have ... Oh, girls here come and go. We don't have enough time for paperwork.

I continued:

- You should pay more attention to that. Sometime your carelessness can make trouble for some people.

The manager seemed surprised when she heard I was in trouble:

- What kind of trouble? She's young, pretty and ... you don't like her?

I asked:

- And what? You know she made me in trouble in here... (I pointed to my head).

The manager:

- She hasn't come to work for two weeks now, since the night she went with you. You know where she is?

I said:

- Yes, she's fine. You know anything about her?

The manager started to give me some clues:

- That girl likes you. She has been observing you since she arrived here 6 months ago. She asked me everything I know about you. I have shown her the magazine. But that girl is shy. She didn't dare to go and talk to you.

I asked:

- Why she did decide to come to me on that night?

The manager:

- She needs someone to take care of her, protect her from her brother. Her brother took drugs and hit her often. Most of the time she slept here; and the other day, her brother came here and asked her for money. She didn't want to give him the money and then he hit her with a plate. She's a nice girl, save her and don't do anything to hurt her. I believe she's had enough.

And I said:

- But she didn't ask me for anything.

The manager:

- She won't ask. She was afraid that you wouldn't understand her feelings. But she is waiting for you.

I asked the manager:

- Did she think I would come here?

The manager:

- I told not to regret past decisions that he decided to go to you means she would accept any consequences. It depends on you now. Don't be afraid; she won't cause you any trouble. Take

her as your secret lover. That's all she needs from you. She doesn't want to become like everybody here. Please wait here; I have something for you.

I was confused. The manager came back with a package.

She gave it to me and said:

- She told me to give it to you if you came and asked about her. I give you her home address, in case you want to find out about her family background. That's all I can do to help. I hope you two have a nice happy life.

The manager left me at the table. I felt like I was in a movie or something. I opened the package. There was one of those colorful beach vacation shirts. I started to think that it has been a long time since I've had a holiday. I've worked like a dog for nights and days. I sat there quite long time. How could she know all those things? Does she have a sixth sense or something?

I gave her home address to Phy, to go and check on her house and her brother. Malai lived with her mother. Her mother is a merchant at the Russian Market. Her father divorced her mother and re-married another woman. Her father works in the army. I could see where Malai got her strong personality. Maybe it was the divorce that makes her brother become a gangster. One night I went to see her brother. I caught him at a bar.

I asked him:

- You know what you are doing?

He replied but I guess he was scared to death:

- I am doing shit. I do what I want. It's none of your business.

I said:

- Well, I don't care what you did before but now it has my business. I know your sister.

He didn't feel good when he knew that Malai had come to me. He said:

- Bitch!

I warned him:

- You can continue your shit but don't look for her and ask for money. And stop hitting her. If you do that again, I cannot be as gentle as this time. You get my meaning?

He looked down. He dared not look at me. Since Phy and Virak played their role as the gangsters and me the big boss, we did play a joke on him.

I shouted in his ear:

- Do you get what I mean?

He was too scared. He just murmured Bitch! Bitch! and ran away. We let him run. It was already a clear message to him.

Now it was my turn to make the decision. I wore the shirt she'd given me and went to see her at the hotel. It was a Saturday night. I had just signed the contract with the Koreans on a project to build a new city. I didn't join the celebration party. I went to see my secret lover.

I phoned her from the reception desk:

- Allo?

She answered with a very low voice:

- Yeah?

I asked:

- Would you like to go to Kampongsom with me?

I didn't hear she reply anything, I waited for a while then I heard she her ask:

- Now?

I answered:

- Yeah now.... I'll be waiting for you at the reception.

In the back seat of the car, along the road to Kampongsom, she grabbed my hands and put her head on my shoulder. There were many words I wanted to say. But I felt like she could read my mind and hear what I wanted to say. We didn't need to speak a word. Let the others talk!

We both agreed on an agreement without words, without signature, without witness. It was an agreement that no one else in this world could understand. It was a big moment in my life. I never imagined in this world there would be a woman who could understand me without saying a word.

It was the nicest weekend I've ever had in my life.

After we got back to Phnom Penh, Malai stayed at that hotel for months. Later on I bought a house for her. We lived together like husband and wife. Malai never asked me about marriage. I stopped also all the adventures with other girls. She allowed me to go back home regularly, so that nobody noticed about our secret affair. I asked her mother to come and live with us. It's always good to have old people living with their children. Malai, she started to learn about computers. She wanted to become my secretary. I preferred that she get her own business. I opened a Beauty Salon for her and she loves the shop.

I talked to her brother about finding a job for him, and later he became one of my bodyguards. He loves that stuff. He completely stopped doing drugs and gambling. He also now lives with us.

You see, without acknowledgment from my family, I have built another family. I don't know what will happen tomorrow. But I will not lose them, whatever it costs.

The end

The events and characters in this short story are completely fictitious, any similarities to persons, alive or dead, are completely coincidental.

Special Thanks:

Author would like to make special thanks to Rachny for the story cover, to all the proof readers: Rath, Kane, Nary, Pheaktra and Kalyan. You all help me a lots in editing the story.

Author would like to thank to Professor Teri Shaffer YAMADA, editor of Virtual Lotus: Modern Fiction of Southeast Asia and organizer of Nou Hach Literary Journal, for her grateful and kindly helps in editing the last version of the story.

Phnom Penh July 26, 2008

Khmerbird  
[www.khmerbird.com](http://www.khmerbird.com)