

CHAPTER 6 PART 2



THE HAUNTING OF PALMER MANSION

FICTION

Rawly Rawls

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This is a reboot of an earlier illustrated version of this novel.

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The twins sat in the dining room eating breakfast before school. "How's the ankle?" Brittney said between bites of bagel.

"I'll live." Daniel paused his spoonful of cereal on its way to his mouth. "How's your hand?"

"I'll live." Brittney held up her lightly bandaged hand and offered a thin smile. "I just don't want to see that man with the top hat ever again."

"Me too." Daniel nodded and took the bite of cereal. That was so very true.

The doorbell chimed, playing the first eight notes from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

"I'll get it." Julie stepped out of the kitchen and walked through the dining room. She wore a skirt and an oversized t-shirt.

"You look ... different, Mom," Brittney called after her.

"Don't be rude, pumpkin." Julie smiled at her daughter. Her plan today was to pretend nothing was wrong. Fake it until you make it.

Daniel could just barely hear Julie talking to someone as she answered the door. A few minutes later, she returned to the dining room with two people behind her. "Daniel and Brittney, meet our guests." Julie smiled at her children. "This is Mr. Maxamed Samatar and Mrs. Khadra Samatar." Julie stepped to the side so her children could say hello. Maxamed was a tallish man with dark skin, short black hair, and a crisp blue suit and tie. He did not smile at the twins. Khadra was a short, slim woman, wearing a dress that covered all but her hands, and a headscarf that covered her hair and neck. Her complexion matched her husband's, but she offered a wide smile with lots of white teeth.

"Hello, children." Khadra nodded to each twin in turn.

"Hello." Brittney returned the smile and looked at the equipment each guest held. They had all sorts of electronic devices in their hands and hung over their shoulders.

"Hi." Daniel hadn't ever met a woman with a hijab before, but he had seen them around. He thought Khadra was quite striking with her pretty, heart-shaped face. He wondered what her hair looked like. But, he guessed, that was the point of the hijab. "Are you helping with the remodel?"



"We are here to –" Khadra started to say something, but was cut off by her husband.

"We are experts with the paranormal." Maxamed's countenance looked grim. "We are here to investigate and rid your home of any demons that may linger. I get the feeling that we may be needed. I feel the presence of Dhegdheer. Do you not, Khadra?"

"Let's not scare the children." Kahdra's smile widened further as she tried to reassure the two youngsters.

"We're not children. We're eighteen." Brittney raised an eyebrow and looked at Julie. "What's this about, Mom?"

"Nothing, pumpkin." Julie stepped over to her daughter and patted her on the shoulder.

"Ghosts?" Daniel's face turned pale. He suddenly worried for Eloise. "You're here to rid the house of ghosts?"



While Daniel talked to the Samatars, Brittney stood and leaned close to Julie. "Ghosts, Mom? This is weird. I don't think they're even Christian," Brittney whispered.

"They were free," Julie whispered to her daughter as Daniel peppered the Samatars with questions. "I don't mind who they worship. I just want them to check the house. It's just a precaution." Julie leaned away from Brittney and addressed the room. "The twins were just leaving for school. Would you like to put down your things?"

"We'll set them down below the main stairs and get started. This could take all morning." Maxamed eyed Julie like he did not like what he saw. "Where is your husband?"

"He's up in the west tower." Julie walked past her guests to the dining room doorway. "I'll lead you to him. You can drop your stuff on the way." She turned back to the twins. "Off to school with you two." She then left with the Samatars right behind her.

"I don't like it." Daniel furrowed his brows and stared at the empty doorway.

"It's weird, but whatever." Brittney picked up her backpack from where it leaned by the wall. "Does Mom look like she's putting on weight to you?"

"Maybe a little." Daniel slowly stood and moved toward his own backpack. He didn't want to leave the house and let those people harm Eloise. But what could he do?

"She looks good, don't get me wrong." Brittney didn't notice the far off look in her brother's eyes. "I'm just worried that the move may have been harder on her than normal. Gaining weight is a sign of ..." Brittney talked and talked as they made their way to the front door.

Beyond his sister's voice, Daniel heard a whisper pass down the long hall. It was Eloise's sweet voice.

"Never fear, dearie," Eloise said. "I've faced worse. I'll be here when you return."

Daniel smiled and looked at his sister. She was still talking about weight. She didn't seem to hear Eloise. He took a deep breath. This was good. Everything would be fine. The twins left the house to go catch their bus.

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When Maxamed and Khadra started their investigation, Maxamed switched to speaking Somali. He knew his wife preferred English, but he always thought the mother tongue would give them the upper hand on American evil spirits. "They have lots of white people books," "In a week, we'll return. We encourage you to consider a donation at that time so that we may continue our invaluable work." Maxamed gathered his things and stood next to his wife.

"What are white people books?" Khadra also spoke Somali. She was a good wife and tried to do what was asked of her.

"I'm picking up something on the meter. A heavy EMF." Maxamed stepped closer to the books and stopped with his detector touching a book titled *First Love*. "This, Khadra, is a white person book."

"Is it?" Khadra moved close to her husband and read the spine. "It's Russian, not American."

"Russians are white people." Maxamed turned off his detector and looked carefully at the spine of each book in the area.

"That is the problem with you, husband." Khadra shivered despite the warm temperature in the room. "It is always us and them with you. I am American. You are American. It is simply *we*, now."

"Watch your tongue, woman." Maxamed pulled out *First Love* and looked in the gap where it had been.

"Sorry." Khadra lowered her eyes.

"There is something here behind the books." Maxamed took more books from the shelf and stared. "Allah, have mercy."



“What is it?” Khadra peered into the opening her husband had made and gasped. “What malevolent spirit taunts us so?”

“Grab me a bag and tongs.” Maxamed watched his slender wife dig into her bag. “Do you think it is the lady’s? She was dressed like a harlot.”

“No. She’s the innocent sort.” Khadra rose with the bag and tongs and handed them to her husband. “Look at the size. What woman could fit that inside her?”

“If you take my tool inside you, surely you could take this.” Maxamed chuckled to himself. “Do not answer that. This thing is that of a giant.”

Khadra giggled but did not answer. She watched her husband bag it up and stuff it in his tote. “What other tricks does this spirit have in store?”

“We shall see.” Maxamed put the books back on the shelf. “We shall see.”

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The paranormal investigators sat across the dining table from George and Julie. They had spent the morning going through the house. Somewhere far off in the house a clock struck noon.

Khadra cocked her head and listened. That was odd, she didn't remember seeing a large chiming clock as they searched the house.

"Can we offer you lunch?" Julie smiled at the couple.

"No thank you, Mrs. Anderson." Maxamed barely curved his lips in reply. "Ridding the world of evil spirits is payment enough. Of course, some people choose to donate to our cause. That would be greatly appreciated."

George shot Julie a harsh look.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Samatar." Julie patted George's hand on the table. "We're a little short on funds right now."

"Well, maybe when you spend some time in your lovely house without the company of spirits, you will find some funds. Yes?" Maxamed nodded to himself. "Our instruments picked up many anomalous results. The library was of particular interest to us. We found objects that had lingering traces of an entity." Maxamed placed Julie's copy of *First Love*, on the table. "Do you know this book?"

"Yes." Julie nodded and thought about Eloise's interest in the novel. "That's my book."





"Strange." Khadra opened the book and peered at the first page. "Perhaps -"

"Perhaps it is of little interest." Maxamed cut off his wife. "We also found this tool in the library. I must warn you, this is ... um ... uncomfortable for us." He reached into his tote. "But that is what the spirits desire. To make us uneasy." He pulled the massive, black dildo, out of his tote. It was still in a clear plastic bag. He placed it on the table.

George's eyes widened, but he said nothing.

"Um ... um ..." Julie stammered. How did it get back in the library? "I've ... we've never seen that before."

Khadra eyed Julie closely. Was this her phallus after all? Khadra could not imagine this innocent woman taking such a thing inside her. She adjusted her headscarf and tried to think purer thoughts.

"Just as I thought." Maxamed nodded with gravity. "These evil spirits love tricks. We will dispose of this for you."

"Thank you." George glared at his wife.

"We have made symbols of protection with salt on the floor of the library, the main living room, and the boy's room upstairs," Maxamed said. "Also, the fireplaces. Wherever our sensors picked up activity. Please do not disturb the symbols."

"Is that really necessary?" George sighed. He couldn't believe his wife got him to agree to this.

"Most necessary." Maxamed's dark lips pressed together. He did not like being questioned. "The last thing to discuss is the locked room by the main stairs. We must gain access."

"We don't have a key." George shrugged. "I'll get to it eventually. The best we can tell from the original house plan is that it was some sort of drawing room. Smaller than the other living rooms."

"I do not think that is right." Maxamed shook his head slowly. "That I do not like. I will place a very strong protection symbol outside that door. In a week's time, we will return to freshen our symbols. If the door is unlocked by then, that would be very well for all."

"Sure." George would get to it when he got to it.

"We will now finish up with your home." Khadra offered her pretty smile and stood.



"In a week, we'll return. We encourage you to consider a donation at that time so that we may continue our invaluable work." Maxamed gathered his things and stood next to his wife.

"We'll think about it." Julie stood too.

"Thank you." Maxamed nodded and the couple exited the dining room.

"What a scam," George whispered.

"They've calmed my nerves, dear." Julie patted George's shoulder. "Maybe we will give them a small donation when they come back."

"And how did that huge black thing end up in the library, Jules? I thought you threw it away." George stood, suddenly very nervous that his wife had been using that monster behind his back.

"It wasn't me." Julie looked into his eyes with complete sincerity. "I don't know how that thing got in the library."

"Okay, fine." Funny thing was, George believed his wife. She hadn't put it there. Maybe the

house was haunted. Or maybe she was sleepwalking. Whatever was happening, George wished his list of projects wasn't quite so long. He didn't want his family to spend any more time in the Palmer Mansion than they had to.