

As You Wish

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Prologue

The evening sky, high above the city of Jerusalem. Suspended in mid-air is a carpet, upon which lie KING SOLOMON and an attractive female jinn. The jinn has a very pretty name, but we'll call her JEANNIE. With the sound of wind around them, SOLOMON observes the glow of his city below.

SOLOMON

Beautiful.

JEANNIE

Isn't it?

SOLOMON

I wasn't talking about the view.

SOLOMON turns to JEANNIE and kisses her. He goes further, pushing her to the carpet and kissing her neck. JEANNIE laughs with delight.

JEANNIE

Giggling:

Solo—!

SOLOMON

What's that?

JEANNIE

Solomon, you have to—

SOLOMON

Say my name again?

JEANNIE

Solomon—

SOLOMON

Are you sure? I think you're missing a title.

JEANNIE

King Solomon.

SOLOMON

That's it.

JEANNIE

King Solomon, you have to let me go.

SOLOMON

Oh, never.

JEANNIE

I am the only thing keeping us from the ground.

SOLOMON

Casually, still kissing:

Are you?

JEANNIE

Do you know how far above the city we are? How steep the drop is? I need to concentrate. Here—

She gently pushes him away and sits up. She takes his arm and dips it below the carpet.

Do you feel that?

SOLOMON

That's a strong breeze.

JEANNIE

That's me. I'm creating that. It's for us.

SOLOMON

You're a special girl.

JEANNIE

I'm a very special girl.

SOLOMON

And you have the King of the Israelites completely at your mercy. You could drop me.

JEANNIE

I never could.

SOLOMON sneaks a kiss. JEANNIE laughs.

If you let me work!

SOLOMON

It is impressive, isn't it? All of that is mine. You must be impressed.

JEANNIE

I am.

SOLOMON

You have the wind; that's impressive. But you can't see it. This....

He waves his hand over the city.

It's mine and it's astounding. I didn't know I had this many streets.

JEANNIE

I can believe that. I would guess you also don't know how many wives you have.

SOLOMON

Are you jealous?

JEANNIE

Very.

SOLOMON

It's true; I'm the marrying kind. They're well taken care of.

He looks down.

But I don't see any of my wives close by. I don't see anyone. Just a genie.

JEANNIE

Stop.

SOLOMON

A wind spirit.

JEANNIE

I'm just a girl.

SOLOMON

Of course you are.

JEANNIE

You don't need to say what I am. When we're alone, we're just man and woman.

SOLOMON

You're very woman. And very magical.

JEANNIE

You want magic, you do it. You're a sorcerer.

SOLOMON

Sorcerer? No! Scholar, scholar! Student of life. My father was a fighter. I'm a philosopher. A self-made wise man. I'm a judge. I'm building a temple. I'm smarter than you are.

JEANNIE

No.

SOLOMON

I am.

JEANNIE

You're young. Mortal. You can't be smarter.

SOLOMON

But I try. I try so very hard. I think very hard. So much I exhaust myself.

JEANNIE

All that flesh and blood, doing all that work. But you can't compete. Not with me. You have a mind; I have the wind. Anything I want to know comes from the air. Any lecture, any whisper, I can bring it to me. You can't compete.

SOLOMON

I'll outsmart you. My genie.

JEANNIE

Nobody's genie.

SOLOMON

Nobody's? How did we meet?

JEANNIE

You called me and I came.

SOLOMON

At my command.

JEANNIE

I wanted an audience with the King. That hardly makes me yours.

SOLOMON

Yes.... We could do something about that.

JEANNIE

Could we?

SOLOMON

All of my current wives, they're so desperately—earthbound. So human.

JEANNIE

She kisses him:

Most wives are like that.

SOLOMON

If only there were a way to solve that.

JEANNIE

Wise King Solomon, stumped for an answer.

SOLOMON

Tell me about beauty. When I met you, you told me it was your specialty.

JEANNIE

It is. I study it. When I see something beautiful, I come in for a closer look.

SOLOMON

I like close.

They kiss. The wind picks up.

Breathtaking.

The wind increases further.

Do you think you're coming on too strong?

JEANNIE

Hmmm...?

SOLOMON

Up until now you kept the wind below us.

JEANNIE

I am.

She looks around the empty sky.

We're not alone.

The wind blows its worst with the entrance of a GENIE. He howls as he swoops in, grabbing SOLOMON by the throat and holding him up. SOLOMON gasps.

GENIE

Solomon!

He motions for JEANNIE's silence.

You listen to me and don't stop. You call yourself King. You rule over every man and beast in your sight and it isn't enough. You learn sorcery. You see us, creatures of the air, and you want us, too. You make us slaves. But you're not getting her.

SOLOMON

Gasping, to JEANNIE:

Who's he?

JEANNIE

To GENIE:

Why are you here?

GENIE

I'm saving you.

JEANNIE

Do I need saving?

GENIE drops SOLOMON onto the carpet.

GENIE

King Solomon is building a temple. He's using spirits. That's what he does with his sorcery; he forces us into his command.

JEANNIE

No....

SOLOMON

Getting up:

Is that what you think? Supernatural jealousy; I've never seen it. It's really something.

GENIE

To JEANNIE:

Have you seen his temple?

JEANNIE

What's been built. It looks nice.

SOLOMON

My people need nice; we need very nice.

GENIE glares at SOLOMON and pushes him from the carpet. Instead of falling, he remains suspended in the air. GENIE looks at JEANNIE. She folds her arms.

GENIE

Let him fall.

JEANNIE

The King and I were in the middle of something.

GENIE

Let him fall; he's harmed too many of us already. Let him fall onto the land he controls and out of the sky he has violated and does not understand.

No response.

GENIE (cont.)

I can push harder than you can.

JEANNIE

Then do it.

SOLOMON

Either way, can we make up our minds?

A burst of wind pushes SOLOMON back onto the carpet. He stays on his knees.

JEANNIE

To GENIE:

You see how easy that was? We had the chance to turn the King of the Israelites into a stain on the ground. It was effortless. And you think he's dangerous.

GENIE

He's a sorcerer. How did he find you? He summoned you.

JEANNIE

Yes, and what a big effort it took him. He's a bright boy.

GENIE

That's the first step. Then he enchants you and enslaves you.

SOLOMON

I'm very enchanting.

GENIE

I don't ever want that to happen to you.

JEANNIE

You care.

GENIE

I'm saving your life.

SOLOMON

For immortal spirits, that's saying something.

JEANNIE

You're almost romantic.

GENIE

We have a history together. A long one. I never want to give that up. I can't lose you. I love you.

SOLOMON

My dear, I promise you, I was about to say to you the very same thing.

JEANNIE

To GENIE:

You love me....

SOLOMON

I can prove it. Here, let me.

GENIE takes JEANNIE into his arms and kisses her. SOLOMON reacts.

JEANNIE

Breaking the kiss:

Wow.

SOLOMON

Don't believe him!

JEANNIE

Wow.

SOLOMON

I've got a— You've got to wait!

GENIE

You don't have to say anything.

JEANNIE

But Solomon's right. I don't believe you. You could have told me this years ago.

GENIE

There was less at stake then.

SOLOMON

It's jealousy! Flush with blood, or whatever you creatures have, you'll say anything. However, your majesty is far more constant in his deeds and his words. As well as his actions....

He reveals a ring to JEANNIE.

You don't have to be jealous of my wives anymore.

JEANNIE

Solomon!

GENIE

Stopping her:

No. This is what he wants.

SOLOMON

You got that right.

GENIE

This is how he does it. His enchantments bind you!

SOLOMON

Marriage is binding. Say yes.

JEANNIE

To GENIE:

Why shouldn't I? You don't know what I've found with Solomon. The two of us, up until now, were colleagues. You like to observe and experiment with humanity. I want to experience it. And I found myself a king.

GENIE

He's an insect!

JEANNIE

He's mortal. So I don't think you should get worked up. This isn't forever.

SOLOMON

I'd like to think it is.

JEANNIE

Oh, for you, yes, of course.

JEANNIE (cont.)

To GENIE:

If you really love me, you can tell me when I'm in between relationships.

GENIE

You think he's going to give us that chance?

JEANNIE

Please....

GENIE

You think he really loves you?

JEANNIE

You see the ring.

GENIE

Don't you dare take it.

SOLOMON

Scare tactics...!

GENIE

I'm afraid for what it'll do to you.

SOLOMON

This is all he has to offer.

He scratches his head.

This wasn't the way I've planned this. I've had better marriage proposals. If you two want to take some time, work this out—

JEANNIE

No, Solomon. I'm not changing my answer. I will marry you.

SOLOMON

With a kiss:

I won't disappoint you.

GENIE

Get away from her! This is bad.

JEANNIE

In between kisses:

Oh, it's very bad. I'm making a mistake. I'll get over it.

GENIE

I'm afraid you won't.

SOLOMON

So, should we do this proper? Do you have parents I should talk this over with?

JEANNIE

Don't worry about that.

SOLOMON

Witnesses?

JEANNIE

We have one.

SOLOMON

Then we must be doing this properly....

JEANNIE

Very properly.

SOLOMON

The ring?

JEANNIE

Why, whatever for?

SOLOMON

Marry me, spirit.

SOLOMON displays the ring, but he does not place it on JEANNIE'S finger. His arm instead goes back, suspended in the air at an uncomfortable angle. JEANNIE shoots GENIE a look.

JEANNIE

No.

GENIE

I'm not letting him take you!

JEANNIE

I'll pull his arm back.

GENIE

I'll pull it from the socket.

JEANNIE

Get out of here.

SOLOMON collapses; GENIE has let go.

GENIE

Don't do this.

JEANNIE

Go.

GENIE turns away. He stands over SOLOMON. The King stands.

GENIE

She loves you.

SOLOMON nods.

Too bad. I've never had to kill a King before.

Winds rush as GENIE extends his fingers and thrusts them into SOLOMON's body. JEANNIE gasps.

JEANNIE

Solomon!

SOLOMON

Controlled:

Darling!

JEANNIE

To GENIE:

What did you do to him?

Slowly, a wide-eyed GENIE backs away from SOLOMON. As he staggers, his arm can be seen with a lamp on the end of it.

SOLOMON

I calmed him down.

JEANNIE

And you're all right?

SOLOMON

Perfectly. Let's get married.

JEANNIE

But Solomon, what about—?

He kisses her. They break apart. SOLOMON takes the ring in one hand and her fingers in the other. He places the ring on her finger.

SOLOMON

I do.

They embrace.

JEANNIE

That wasn't so bad.

To GENIE:

See? Don't be so violent with my new hus—

JEANNIE stops, seeing GENIE struggle with the lamp.

What's wrong?

GENIE

Oh no....

SOLOMON

He might be stuck.

GENIE

He bound me! I'm bound to him!

JEANNIE

Solomon, no....

SOLOMON

Sly:

Well...that's not exactly true. Your friend is bound to the lamp. Consorting with the spirits presents some...theological problems for my people. But I own a lamp—I'm master to a household object—and it just happens to have a genie bound to it, I think I'm OK.

GENIE

It's too bad you don't really have a god, Solomon. He'd damn you for this.

SOLOMON

You have no right to speak about my—

GENIE

A god wouldn't make such ignorant creatures. And you're the smartest one. The son of slaves, now the biggest slave owner the world has known, human and otherwise.

SOLOMON

I know my history. God's people will never be slaves again. I can guarantee that. Because my every wish is your command. Get in the lamp.

The lamp jerks further up GENIE's arm. He grabs it and resists.

Don't fight it, man! It's no use.

Frantic, GENIE puts the lamp down on the carpet, pushing against it.

SOLOMON (cont.)

My friend, it's time to go.

GENIE

Solomon!

SOLOMON

Master!

GENIE

Give me one honest answer. Do you think she's beautiful?

SOLOMON

Looking at JEANNIE:

That's for her to know.

SOLOMON pushes GENIE into the lamp. SOLOMON takes it from the carpet, checks its weight, and puts it back into his robe.

JEANNIE

What was that?

SOLOMON

Magic! Fit a big man in a small space. It helps that you people are wind spirits. You should see what it takes for a spirit of the Earth.

He stops, smiles.

I think it's time to return to the ground.

JEANNIE

What? Explain this to me.

SOLOMON

I'm going to the temple. I'm putting your friend to work.

JEANNIE

He was right.

SOLOMON

He was exaggerating.

JEANNIE

No, no; this is slavery!

SOLOMON

You don't know slavery! You'll never know it! Slavery is human beings. You spirit people—we have the word of God that we can do what we want with you. I don't feel any different about putting your friend in here than I do of plucking a chicken, harvesting grain: I use the resources God gives me.

JEANNIE

I loved you.

SOLOMON

Like a dog loves her owner.

JEANNIE

You're not taking him.

SOLOMON

I'm done talking about this.

Wind blows as JEANNIE jumps on SOLOMON's back, hitting him.

SOLOMON

Hey!

JEANNIE

Pounding on his back:

Give him back!

SOLOMON

Calmly, firmly:

I wish you wouldn't do that.

JEANNIE's hands snap back in the air, as if from hanging shackles.

JEANNIE

Oh.

SOLOMON

What do you know; it works.

JEANNIE

Solomon, Solomon, how could you?

SOLOMON

What works on the lamp works on the ring.

JEANNIE

I'm your wife!

SOLOMON

Wife? Now, listen—

SOLOMON grabs JEANNIE's wrist, pulling the ring from her finger.

See this? It's no wedding ring. It's nothing!

JEANNIE

But you said—

SOLOMON

It's metal. Now it's your new home.

JEANNIE

No...you loved me.

SOLOMON

You're quite a plaything. A favorite toy. Sit down.

JEANNIE complies, crying softly.

Your friend asked me if I found you beautiful. You mentioned beauty, too. Is it a thing?

JEANNIE

We're experts.

SOLOMON

Beauty experts, huh? Hair, makeup?

JEANNIE

Natural beauty.

SOLOMON

Oh, that sounds like a more philosophical job.

JEANNIE

We found the world's most beautiful man, and the world's most beautiful woman.

SOLOMON

How about that; good for you. Anybody I know?

JEANNIE

It was before your time.

SOLOMON

Who were they?

JEANNIE

A prince and a princess.

SOLOMON

I was a prince. The first prince of my people. Am I beautiful?

JEANNIE

I thought so.

SOLOMON

I guess if I want a better compliment I'll have to wish it from you. We'll do that later.

He looks at her.

I wish to descend now. Slowly.

The carpet begins to descend.

JEANNIE

Solomon.

SOLOMON

My servant?

JEANNIE

You would have had me without the ring.

SOLOMON does not respond. He watches the night sky as they descend. The lights fade.

Act I

Many years later. A small, humble home in China. MOTHER sits quietly, sewing a piece of clothing. Loud, triumphant laughter and running can be heard from offstage, getting closer. The door opens and her son, ALADDIN, enters the house. His face and shirt are bloody. He closes the door, looks at his mother, and smiles.

ALADDIN

I got him, Ma! I got him good!

He goes to MOTHER and kisses her on the head. She pushes him away.

MOTHER

Aladdin!

ALADDIN

All the guys saw me do it!

MOTHER

Clean yourself up.

ALADDIN

Grabbing a towel:

He's been at us all month. Doesn't want us near his store. Says we steal. I say don't put half your shop in the middle of the road. It's the road! We can stand anywhere we want.

MOTHER

Aladdin....

ALADDIN

It's his fault, Ma. His sign's right there, so I take it over my knee and smash it in half! He comes out of the store and starts hitting me, so I hit him back!

MOTHER

You fought an old man and you want me to be proud?

ALADDIN

I had to, Ma! Besides, it was only a couple of punches before we ran off. And you know why he did it? It's because of Islam.

MOTHER

Please. Show some respect.

ALADDIN

He's the one who should be showing respect, Ma. He's prejudiced.

MOTHER

You smashed his sign.

ALADDIN

He deserved it.

MOTHER

And you need to learn some humility.

She returns to her sewing. ALADDIN paces.

ALADDIN

You like Spain, Ma?

MOTHER

Spain?

ALADDIN

Spain. You don't have to be humble there. You don't have to be ashamed of your beliefs. An infidel gets in your way—BAM.

MOTHER

If that's what you think of your faith, I've taught you nothing.

ALADDIN

You taught me plenty, Ma; it's the people around here that need to learn.

MOTHER

I'm waiting for you to find a job.

ALADDIN

I look, Ma!

MOTHER

I can't take care of you anymore. Your father is gone. You can't run in the street your whole life.

ALADDIN

I'm young. My friends don't have jobs.

MOTHER

They have fathers. Ask them for work.

ALADDIN

Aw, Ma, I'm not going to beg. I'll look, OK?

MOTHER

Look harder.

ALADDIN

I could sell things, door to door. Sell that guy a new sign right back now that he needs one.

MOTHER

You could work for him.

ALADDIN

Work for him? Ma, please. You wouldn't approve, anyway.

MOTHER

It's a job.

ALADDIN

It's a magic shop. Traditional Chinese superstition. It's against what you taught me. Potions? Fortunes? I know better than that.

MOTHER

I didn't know that. I'm sure it's less for the sacrilegious than it is for the gullible.

ALADDIN

It isn't right. I'll burn his place down before I work there. Hit him in the face again. There are things that are real and there are things we can't accept. We don't need magic.

MAGICIAN

Excuse me?

*A man appears in the doorway. He is an imposing African man who we will come to know as the **MAGICIAN**. He points to **ALADDIN**.*

MAGICIAN (cont.)

You're Aladdin?

MOTHER

*To **ALADDIN**:*

Who is this? What did you do now?

MAGICIAN

No, it's fine. More than fine—Aladdin!

*The **MAGICIAN** hugs **ALADDIN** closely.*

Aladdin, my boy! I'm your uncle!

ALADDIN

Breaking away:

What? Uncle? How can you be my uncle?

MAGICIAN

*To **MOTHER**:*

I'm a friend of your husband's. From long ago. It took me many months to travel here. I heard he was in poor health.

MOTHER

That was true.

MAGICIAN

I'm sorry. Both of you, left alone like this. He was a generous man. Did he continue to travel?

MOTHER

All the time, until shortly before he passed. He was on the road more often than he was at home. That must be where he knew you from.

MAGICIAN

Your husband and I were inseparable for a time. I owe him my life many times over.

ALADDIN

How does this make you my uncle?

MOTHER

Where are you from?

MAGICIAN

Originally? Morocco. But I've spent a long time traveling. Mecca. Jerusalem. But this is my first time in China. Edge of the Islamic world.

ALADDIN

Like Spain.

MAGICIAN

Oh, much different than Spain.

ALADDIN

You ever been there?

MAGICIAN

I have. Very beautiful. If you like stonework.

ALADDIN

I keep telling Ma we should go. It's Muslim.

MAGICIAN

Parts of it.

ALADDIN

And that makes us outsiders here, anyway. So I say we make the Hadj and keep going.

MAGICIAN

It's a tough trip. Think of your mother.

ALADDIN

Aw, she's all right. Besides, what does she have here?

MOTHER

Everything. Your plans are nonsense. The boy needs more responsibility.

MAGICIAN

Is that so?

ALADDIN

I got the discipline; it's only I don't have the right job. Like that magic shop.

MAGICIAN

Chinese remedies? The horns of African animals?

ALADDIN

Yeah.

MAGICIAN

It's all a waste of time.

ALADDIN

That's what I told Ma; there's no such thing as magic.

MAGICIAN

I have a job for you.

A beat.

If Mustafa were here, I would have had business for him.

MOTHER

You need something mended?

MAGICIAN

Light laugh:

No. Your husband and I were a team, of sorts. I'd be willing to take your son on in his place, in a more limited role.

MOTHER

What kind of work?

MAGICIAN

Digging. It's not exciting.

ALADDIN

Digging.

MAGICIAN

I'm sort of an explorer. I want to dig something up. You want to help?

ALADDIN

I don't know.

MAGICIAN

It's digging. It's work and you'll get paid for it. You can trust me. We're family.

ALADDIN

Right.

MAGICIAN

So what do you say? Tomorrow morning at dawn. We head out and I show you where we dig.

ALADDIN

This is what you want me to do, Ma? Become a day laborer?

MOTHER

It's a first job.

ALADDIN

And we're not digging where my friends'll see me, right?

MAGICIAN

Total seclusion. You'll enjoy the countryside, get out of the city.

ALADDIN

I didn't know you. Like, ten minutes ago.

MAGICIAN

That's true.

ALADDIN

So—I don't want to say I don't trust you. I mean, digging. What's there to trust?

MAGICIAN

I'm rushing you—

ALADDIN

Nah....

MAGICIAN

—You're confused. It's fine.

ALADDIN

Yeah, but—it would help you out, right?

MAGICIAN

It would.

ALADDIN

So, OK. You're looking for something; I'll help you out.

MAGICIAN

You don't have to.

ALADDIN

Don't worry about it.

MAGICIAN

Then you've got a job.

ALADDIN

What do I do?

MAGICIAN

I'll come by tomorrow after sunrise.

ALADDIN

I need a shovel?

MAGICIAN

It's taken care of.

MOTHER

Why not stay?

MAGICIAN

Here? Thank you; I have accommodations.

MOTHER

For dinner, at least.

MAGICIAN

If only I could, but there's so much to prepare. I really do have to go, but I'm so glad to have found you.

MOTHER

Goodbye!

ALADDIN

See you tomorrow, Uncle.

The MAGICIAN nods and exits.

How about that? You got your wish.

MOTHER

I'm glad you're agreeable now. My wish used to be that you'd learn from your father. Keep his shop in the family.

ALADDIN

You've said this, Ma. I didn't want that. I don't want to be a tailor.

MOTHER

You could have helped your father out, that's all.

ALADDIN

Ma, that wouldn't be all. You know I pick up a needle and thread and I'll be doing that my whole life. Die with my arm in a pant leg like Dad!

MOTHER

Be respectful.

ALADDIN

I'm just saying, I know he traveled and everything, but overall—. I'm not a tailor.

MOTHER

Fine. Go dig your ditch.

ALADDIN

It's one ditch, Ma, not the next 40 years. It's exploration.

MOTHER

It's something.

ALADDIN

I'm surprised that this is OK with you. You don't trust my friends and you know their mothers. I get an uncle out of nowhere and you encourage me.

MOTHER

I trust him.

ALADDIN

He's not really my uncle.

MOTHER

He's a friend of your father. And he's Muslim.

ALADDIN

You're right. You know, that means a lot more than it should around here. But he's Muslim. He's family. And he's got an opportunity.

MOTHER

Aladdin, you're growing up. You're almost grown. You need to plan your future.

ALADDIN

I don't know, Ma. Any future I have, I don't know I'd want it to look much different than this.

MOTHER

You have dinner to prepare.

ALADDIN

All right....

Lights fade on ALADDIN's house and rise on the MAGICIAN. He reclines in bed, regarding a ring he holds.

MAGICIAN

A Prince and a Princess. Tell me how you found them.

Lights up on JEANNIE, preparing the expedition tools.

JEANNIE

We were air spirits. We traveled. Anywhere the wind would carry us.

MAGICIAN

And so you just picked them up, and that's when you—?

JEANNIE

I found the Prince. He had been locked in a tower by his father. The boy refused to marry, so...that's what kings did then. I saw him sleeping through a window, high above the city. He was the most beautiful person I had ever seen.

MAGICIAN

So your friend, he found the girl.

JEANNIE

It was under almost the same circumstances. He had made a trip to China, spotted her through a palace window. She also refused to marry. I found my friend, and we told each other we had found the most beautiful human beings on earth. We argued: of course my prince was more beautiful than his princess. We argued for a long time; I began to doubt this understanding of true beauty.

MAGICIAN

You're the greater expert, I can tell.

JEANNIE

I said as much. But we spoke to a third friend instead. He suggested a wager.

MAGICIAN

A wager?

JEANNIE

Yes.

MAGICIAN

What do you wager for beauty?

JEANNIE

Freedom.

MAGICIAN

Put that down. I'll pack the rest.

JEANNIE stands and backs away.

Ah, beauty. Of course you're an expert.

JEANNIE

I wanted to thank you.

MAGICIAN

You're welcome. What am I being thanked for?

JEANNIE

For being my master and knowing it. You don't call yourself my husband. You don't pretend this relationship is any different than it is.

MAGICIAN

What a strange compliment.

JEANNIE

Prior masters have fallen in love with me.

MAGICIAN

Fools.

JEANNIE

They treated me as a husband would a wife.

MAGICIAN

Smirks:

We've done that.

JEANNIE

They did in ways that made me love them back.

MAGICIAN

It all sounds sweet to me.

JEANNIE

It was. Until they remembered I was in chains. And they held the other end.

MAGICIAN

Oh, I've never forgotten that.

JEANNIE

I know. Thank you.

MAGICIAN

Though I notice a bit of self-interest in your compliment. The previous masters you've seduced—I'm sure they fell sincerely, deeply in love with you. But I'd guess most of them were amateurs. Wide-eyed travelers who

MAGICIAN (cont.)

didn't know what it meant to command a wind spirit. But now you've found a magician, and I know exactly what I've got.

He finishes packing.

You know I liked you when I found you? I admired you. Despite your limitations. Other spirits are said to move entire villages overnight. You move buildings brick by brick over the course of weeks. I see the pyramids. I want to take one. You say it's too heavy. You're not a very good genie.

JEANNIE

I was good at beauty.

MAGICIAN

I can get that anywhere. Power—power of strength, power of authority—that's what I need. That's what I'm good at. And that's what we're going for tomorrow.

JEANNIE

Another spirit.

MAGICIAN

A new toy. Left there by a former magician.

JEANNIE

You could be chasing a lie.

MAGICIAN

Oh, not likely. This man was a Christian. Or, about as Christian as I'm Muslim. He had to answer to his Inquisition. He had to renounce the magic he knew and embrace his church and his God. Had to.

JEANNIE

I know their methods. Any spirit could have freed him.

MAGICIAN

I'm not sure if he was in the right state of mind to command it. Instead, he bargained. He testified. He buried his black magic at the other end of the world to appease the holy court. It wasn't enough.

He stretches.

The Inquisition keeps excellent records. I found his testimony and will soon find his former servant. Then I don't know what I'll do with you.

JEANNIE

Men always want the next rung up the ladder. I have given you so much. You think you'll get more.

MAGICIAN

I know I will. You're looking at a future king.

JEANNIE

I've seen kings before.

MAGICIAN

Yes, but you're no good at making them.

JEANNIE frowns.

I'm sure I don't hold a very high rank among your masters.

JEANNIE

You don't have to say it again.

MAGICIAN

Say what?

JEANNIE

That you're not in love with me.

The MAGICIAN stops, flustered.

MAGICIAN

I wonder how you'll treat your next master.

JEANNIE

I didn't particularly want one.

MAGICIAN

And who wants you? I'm not sure if I want a new servant as much as I want to be rid of the one I have.

JEANNIE

Exactly. If I'm worthless as a commodity there's only one thing to do.

MAGICIAN

Bury the ring?

JEANNIE

Free me.

MAGICIAN

That takes more than a wish.

JEANNIE

It takes magic! You have magic! You can unbind me!

MAGICIAN

Let a wind spirit free. Following me, out for my blood.

JEANNIE

Is that what you think of me?

MAGICIAN

I value my well-being over your free will. Funny how that works out.

JEANNIE

I hate you.

MAGICIAN

Good.

JEANNIE

I hate you so much.

MAGICIAN

I know you do. Take off your clothes.

Wounded, JEANNIE begins to disrobe. The lights crossfade with ALADDIN in a forest. He shovels dirt from a knee-deep hole. The MAGICIAN brings the gear closer to the hole and inspects it. He hands ALADDIN a flask of water.

Looks good.

ALADDIN

Drinks:

This can't be it.

MAGICIAN

Think so?

ALADDIN

Check your map; this can't be the right spot.

MAGICIAN

Keep digging. You'll see what I'm talking about.

ALADDIN

All right, but I'm sure this is dirt that hasn't been touched in years.

MAGICIAN

Who says we're looking for something buried recently?

ALADDIN

You're a real live treasure hunter, huh?

MAGICIAN

That's me.

ALADDIN

Not much of an uncle, though.

MAGICIAN

Really.

ALADDIN

All I'm saying, if you were, you'd have shown up for a visit a whole lot sooner. You know, if you were such a friend of my dad, you would have seen him.

MAGICIAN

I thought your father had years left in him.

ALADDIN

Yeah, you hear my mother talk I took them all away.

MAGICIAN

You're a rotten kid, huh?

ALADDIN

That's me.

MAGICIAN

You're digging for me. You're not all bad.

ALADDIN

Yeah, all right.

MAGICIAN

You'll see. You'll turn out OK.

ALADDIN

Hey, give me the pickaxe. I hit another rock.

MAGICIAN

All right.

He hands ALADDIN a pickaxe.

Another rock, huh?

ALADDIN

Between swings:

I don't want to say anything, but no matter how long ago you bury something, you usually don't roll boulders on top.

MAGICIAN

It keeps it hidden.

ALADDIN

Yeah, but you'd need at least half a dozen guys digging the path, pushing the boulder. Six guys don't keep a secret for long. Not this long.

MAGICIAN

What if I told you that this was all done by one man?

ALADDIN

You want to tell me something, Uncle, you tell me what we're digging for.

MAGICIAN

You want to know?

ALADDIN

I've wanted to know. You said you'd tell me when we came out here.

MAGICIAN

Fair enough. We're here for evidence.

ALADDIN

Like, of crime?

MAGICIAN

Of a man. A powerful man who could have been even more powerful. While traveling, I've met people who spoke of him with reverence, many more who've hated him, and even more who didn't believe he ever existed. At least not in the way he was said to exist.

ALADDIN

So we might not find anything.

MAGICIAN

I'm sure we'll find quite a bit. For example....

The MAGICIAN shuffles through some papers.

An underground garden of jeweled trees, fatal to the touch. A cavern which gives no echo. And in the center of everything—the evidence.

ALADDIN

Nice story.

MAGICIAN

I think so.

ALADDIN

Needs something like a witch or a princess though. To make it more authentic.

MAGICIAN

A woman's touch. Believe me, this story has had enough of that already.

ALADDIN returns to digging.

Have you ever been in love, Aladdin?

ALADDIN

You know how young I am. Even my mother isn't on me about that yet.

MAGICIAN

People get married at your age.

ALADDIN

Not anybody I know. Why, you have some relationship problem?

MAGICIAN

I'm in love.

ALADDIN

That's a problem already.

MAGICIAN

And it's with the wrong girl.

ALADDIN

This is nothing new.

MAGICIAN

I'm going to have to send her away.

ALADDIN

Have to? People get married at your age.

MAGICIAN

Not to a girl like this.

ALADDIN

This girl knows you love her?

MAGICIAN

Yes.

ALADDIN

And she loves you back.

MAGICIAN

No. But I could have convinced her.

ALADDIN

Of course you could have.

MAGICIAN

If I did something for her when I first met her, she would have loved me. I would have changed her life. But now, I've made her hate me.

ALADDIN

This girl; she's beautiful?

MAGICIAN

She's an expert.

ALADDIN

Yeah, well I'm not. I don't know what you're talking about girl stuff with me for.

MAGICIAN

You need to fall in love, Aladdin. It's good for the heart. Until it kills you. Or drives you mad.

ALADDIN

I'll take my time.

ALADDIN grabs the pickaxe again.

So, do you want to tell me what evidence I'm looking for so I don't break it apart?

MAGICIAN

Oh, there will be a number of amazing trinkets. Gold crosses—

ALADDIN scoffs.

MAGICIAN (cont.)

—arcane texts. And if we're really lucky, we'll find a lamp.

ALADDIN

A lamp?

MAGICIAN

Trinkets are trinkets, but if we find a lamp underneath all this dirt, there's no way to deny what this man has done. You'll find out when we see it.

ALADDIN

I thought you said this would be exciting—

And with a final swing, the ground ALADDIN stands upon breaks away, bringing him underground. Amid the dust, light shines from below.

MAGICIAN

Aladdin!

He runs to the opening.

Aladdin! Can you hear me?

ALADDIN

Off:

Yeah! I'm all right.

MAGICIAN

Oh, praise God. Aladdin, Nephew, you did it. This is what we're looking for. I'm going to send down a torch.

ALADDIN

No, no need. It's lit.

MAGICIAN

Underground? What do you see?

ALADDIN

Trees. Trees with glowing fruit.

MAGICIAN

Aladdin, Aladdin, I want you to listen. Those are the fatal jewels. Don't go near them. Don't touch anything. Only the lamp. Anything else may be a trap. Do you see the lamp?

Beat.

ALADDIN

No.

MAGICIAN

No?

ALADDIN

It's just trees.

MAGICIAN

No, impossible. He described it so clearly. It should be directly underneath.

ALADDIN

I don't know. It might be down this passage.

MAGICIAN

What passage?

ALADDIN

From here it looks like a dead end.

MAGICIAN

Knowing:

It is. There's nothing there.

ALADDIN

I'm going to check it out.

MAGICIAN

There's nothing....

ALADDIN

Faintly:

I'm going!

ALADDIN leaves. The MAGICIAN shakes his head. He looks at his hand. And looks. Unreadable, he removes the ring from his finger and drops it into the hole. He picks up the shovel. He scoops a mound of dirt and begins to fill the hole. Then another. And another. He shovels furiously as the lights fade. JEANNIE enters from one side, carrying a sleeping ALADDIN. Or someone who looks very much like ALADDIN, with a crown on his head. From the other side of the stage, GENIE enters, carrying a similarly unconscious PRINCESS. JEANNIE and GENIE stare at each other.

GENIE

Side by side?

JEANNIE

Side by side.

The spirits carry this Prince and Princess closer together. They observe the pair. In silence, they carry them offstage. As lights fade, shovelfuls of dirt begin to fall on the other side of the stage. Lights rise on an underground garden of jewels. Upstage is a desk with a messy pile of papers. A crownless ALADDIN returns, having run to the far end of the garden. The shovelfuls continue.

ALADDIN

There's nothing down the path. It's a dead end.

He sees the dirt fall.

Hey.

Another shovelful.

What's this? Uncle, you want to throw down a rope—?

Suddenly, the sound of a cave-in. The light from above disappears and a larger, final pile of dirt falls from above. The rumbling stops. ALADDIN looks up.

Uncle, what did you do?

No response.

Are you up there? Can you hear me?

Silence. To himself:

No echo.

ALADDIN looks around. He sees the ring on the ground. He picks it up, looks around, and puts it on his finger. He sees the desk and approaches it. He looks at one of the papers.

Somebody was drawing himself a castle....

As he puts the diagram back on the desk, he sees the lamp, no longer hidden by the papers.

No. This can't be it. It's just here....

He looks around. Everything else is jewels. He carefully picks up the lamp and studies it.

ALADDIN (cont.)

It's office supplies....

He puts the lamp into his bag and continues to sort through the desk.

Nothing here is going to get me out of here....

He abandons the desk and looks around.

Maybe I can climb? But do any of these trees go high enough if I chop them down and bring them— Chop them with what? Oh, God....

ALADDIN kneels.

Oh, God. I'm gonna die here.

He begins to tear up.

I'm not ready. Oh, God. I need to pray....

ALADDIN bends down and begins to rub his hands with dirt. As his hands brush over his ring, he begins to be surrounded by smoke. ALADDIN does not notice; he closes his eyes and prays silently. Out of the smoke steps JEANNIE.

JEANNIE

Master.

She looks at ALADDIN.

A new master. He's so young. He looks like—

ALADDIN's eyes snap open.

ALADDIN

Ah!

JEANNIE

Master!

ALADDIN

Where did you come from? Who are you?

He looks back.

Is that your desk?

JEANNIE

It's not my desk.

ALADDIN

I thought I was alone down here.

JEANNIE

Down here? So we're underground.

ALADDIN

Yeah we're underground. How did you get down here?

JEANNIE

You summoned me.

ALADDIN

Summoned? No, I was too busy on my hands and knees—

He looks at her carefully.

No. You can't be. That's not how angels work.

JEANNIE

You think I'm an angel?

ALADDIN

You can't be. I mean, I prayed. I needed help.

JEANNIE

I can help you.

ALADDIN

No, you see that's not how God works. He answers prayers, but not so directly. He'd never hear me, put an angel in front of me, and help me out. All at once. Would he?

JEANNIE

I wouldn't know, Master.

Beat.

ALADDIN

What are you?

JEANNIE

A spirit of the wind.

ALADDIN

A spirit.

JEANNIE

That's right.

ALADDIN

No; uh uh.

JEANNIE

No?

ALADDIN

There's no such thing. I can't believe you.

JEANNIE

I've said much the same thing about your God.

ALADDIN

Blasphemy!

JEANNIE

Please....

ALADDIN

You serve the Devil!

JEANNIE

I serve only one person, the man who wears the ring.

ALADDIN looks at his hand.

ALADDIN

No. I won't fall for your tricks. I'm not making a deal with you. I'd rather die!

JEANNIE

A deal?

ALADDIN

You want to serve me? Do great things for me? All I have to do is sign over my soul, right?

JEANNIE

Scoffs:

Soul?

ALADDIN

My blood for ink; that's how it goes, right?

JEANNIE

Not at all. That ring—whoever owns it owns me, too. If you have a soul, you get to keep it.

ALADDIN considers this.

ALADDIN

I think this ring came from up there.

JEANNIE

Where?

ALADDIN

This ring was my uncle's.

JEANNIE

He willed it to you?

ALADDIN

He trapped me. He lured me down here to kill me.

JEANNIE

And he gave you the ring?

ALADDIN

He said he was sending me down here to—

ALADDIN stops himself. He looks at JEANNIE.

JEANNIE

Master, don't frown like that. Your face is too beautiful.

ALADDIN scoffs.

I've seen it before.

ALADDIN

Looks away, waving his hand.

I still don't trust you.

JEANNIE

Why should you?

ALADDIN

You're part of this ring?

JEANNIE

I'm bound to it.

ALADDIN

Why's that?

JEANNIE

Because your people don't consider me one of God's creatures.

ALADDIN

That's bitter.

JEANNIE

Yes.

ALADDIN

Who wants a spirit in a ring, anyway?

JEANNIE

Too many men.

ALADDIN

It's because you're powerful, right? Strength of ten men.

JEANNIE

I don't have the strength of ten men.

ALADDIN

Then what do you do?

JEANNIE

I'm a spirit of the air. I can influence the winds and weather. I can take you anywhere. Anything you want I can pluck it from the air.

ALADDIN

You want to tempt me?

JEANNIE

I'm just the servant. Masters discover temptation on their own.

ALADDIN

So if you do wind, let's see some wind.

JEANNIE

Yes, Master.

ALADDIN

Knock those jewels off the branches.

JEANNIE

As you wish.

JEANNIE summons a gust of wind, shaking the branches of a nearby jewel tree and sending its fruit spilling to the ground. ALADDIN looks at the pile of jewels. After a half-beat, he rushes over and begins pocketing the jewels.

JEANNIE

Need help?

ALADDIN

Nah, this is rent, debt, and a day's work. That's all I need now. Actually, I don't know how much any of this stuff is worth. But when it's growing on trees, huh?

JEANNIE

Huh.

ALADDIN

And you can take me anywhere, right? Like out of here.

JEANNIE

Yes.

ALADDIN

All right, OK. This might work out. Let me take these jewels and then I want you to—

Fumbling with a bag for the jewels, the lamp falls out. JEANNIE'S eyes go wide.

Oh, look at that....

JEANNIE

What's that?

ALADDIN

This? Office supplies.

JEANNIE

May I see it?

ALADDIN picks up the lamp. He considers.

ALADDIN

No.... It's important. It proves something.

JEANNIE

I was only going to say—

ALADDIN

What?

JEANNIE

It looks familiar.

ALADDIN

See, I don't know if that ends up being a good thing or a bad thing.

JEANNIE

It would be a very good thing. If it was more than just a lamp.

ALADDIN

That's all it is; sorry.

JEANNIE

Don't be.

ALADDIN

So, spirit, you can get me out of here?

JEANNIE

I can.

ALADDIN

Because you're an air spirit. I don't know what that means for moving rocks.

JEANNIE

I can do it.

ALADDIN

That's weird.

JEANNIE

All you have to do is command it.

ALADDIN

All right. Get us out of here.

JEANNIE

Yes, master.

ALADDIN

To himself:

Master....

JEANNIE walks past ALADDIN to the landslide. He grabs her arm.

Today was my first day ever working.

JEANNIE

The jewels are a nice payday.

ALADDIN

Too nice. I don't want to be your master.

JEANNIE

You say that now.

ALADDIN

No, I mean it.

JEANNIE

You already made a wish. Cover your eyes.

ALADDIN

What for?

The cave begins to swirl with dust. ALADDIN ducks, while JEANNIE stands motionless, concentrating. The stage darkens, expect for a growing beam of light from the surface above. The wind continues as the lights fade. Spotlight on the WAZIR'S SON—a suitor to the PRINCESS.

WAZIR'S SON

To his majesty, the Emperor of China. Your majesty, as you know, your daughter is beautiful. The most beautiful woman in China. The most beautiful woman in the world. This being the case, I agree wholeheartedly with your decision in never allowing the public to see her. Young men like myself—young men like our street rabble would go mad with passion on first sight of her. Productivity in the Empire would plummet. Marriage rates would hit the floor. Men would ask for the unattainable. Wish in vain for her heavenly presence. Nothing else would matter. But, as Emperor, you are wise not to let this happen. No, you surrounded your daughter with only handmaidens, members of the court, and eunuchs. And I am glad to be counted among that number. As a member of the court. I hope I'm not overstepping my bounds. It's my father who serves as your advisor, not me. But as the advisor's son, as your humble subject, I want only to acknowledge your wise handling of your daughter's upbringing. And to ask for her hand in— To ask your permission for— To humbly, humbly, humbly—

He stops, short of breath.

Good practice....

The spotlight fades on the WAZIR'S SON. The wind again howls, and lights come up dimly for night. ALADDIN drops back into his kitchen. He takes two steps and collapses on the floor. JEANNIE follows.

JEANNIE

Anything else, Master?

ALADDIN

Get lost. Go back to the ring.

JEANNIE

As you wish.

JEANNIE fades into a cloud of smoke. ALADDIN picks up the still-smoking ring and looks at it, disgusted. He throws the ring across the kitchen. It disappears underneath a cabinet. ALADDIN pulls himself up and retrieves the jewels from his bag. He then pulls out the lamp. He examines it.

ALADDIN

Not worth it.... Absolutely not worth it.

ALADDIN puts down the lamp and collapses once more. But he has rubbed the lamp. It begins to smoke, and from it appears GENIE. He takes in his surroundings, then takes a few steps to ALADDIN.

Without looking up:

Hey, Ma?

GENIE stops.

Can I have something to eat?

GENIE

Yes, Master.

ALADDIN's head snaps up as wind begins to rush. Lights come up full, revealing a huge banquet. Lights then fade completely. A beat, then the light of a new day rises on one part of the stage. ALADDIN enters the light, carrying a few golden serving trays. He is followed by GENIE. They are surrounded by the sounds of a marketplace. ALADDIN turns to GENIE and stares at him intently.

Yes, Master?

ALADDIN

This was an accident.

GENIE

Was it?

ALADDIN

I could have gotten food myself. I didn't need a spirit for that.

GENIE

But you asked.

ALADDIN

Lifting the trays:

And what are all these? That's insane; you really thought I needed to eat off of gold?

GENIE

Prior masters have requested to.

ALADDIN

You spoiled me. That's what you do. Lead us astray. Tempt us. It makes me sick.

GENIE

I'm sorry, Master.

ALADDIN

I don't need to be spoiled.

GENIE

I understand.

ALADDIN

I figure the first time, that was an emergency. I was trapped. The second time was an accident. And it was just food....

GENIE

What first time?

ALADDIN

Huh?

GENIE

You only wished once.

ALADDIN glares at him.

ALADDIN

You're giving me that look.

GENIE

I knew someone like you once.

ALADDIN

I know the routine.

GENIE

Do you want me to go back to the house? Take the food away?

ALADDIN

I want nothing from you. One wish is enough. We'll eat the food and get rid of the trays and utensils by selling them. Like normal people.

GENIE

OK.

ALADDIN

We don't need your gold. We don't need your tricks. I won't let you corrupt me.

GENIE

Master. Don't frown like that.

ALADDIN

It's all the same lies, isn't it? Look, you're not going to show me anything that's going to make me want your power. I'm not going to fall into your trap.

GENIE

I understand, Master.

ALADDIN

Looking around:

I don't know why everyone's crowded around like this. Let's cut down that way.

GENIE

Which way?

ALADDIN

You know what? I don't need you at all for this. Get back in the lamp.

GENIE

As you wish.

Smoke crosses the stage, obscuring ALADDIN and GENIE. Once it passes, GENIE has disappeared. But someone else appears—the PRINCESS is now visible on the other side of the stage. ALADDIN sees her and stops. They look at each other. Everything disappears except for the couple. Lights rise on the kitchen. MOTHER enters slowly, absentmindedly grabbing a pastry from one of the remaining trays. ALADDIN stumbles downstage to the kitchen, still staring at the PRINCESS. He reaches his MOTHER.

ALADDIN

Ma.

He kisses her on the forehead. He puts a bag of coins into her hand. The PRINCESS is still spotlighted.

Take this. It's for the trays. I sold them.

MOTHER

We don't need all this food.

ALADDIN

You're right, Ma; you're right.

MOTHER

You were celebrating your first day of work?

ALADDIN

Now I have a whole new reason to celebrate. Ma, I saw the girl of my dreams.

MOTHER

Aladdin—

ALADDIN

I'm in love!

MOTHER eyes ALADDIN and takes a bite of her pastry. He looks at the PRINCESS.

I got lost; I was going the wrong way. I was looking at her...

Beat.

It was just like you always hear about.

The PRINCESS's spotlight goes out.

ALADDIN (cont.)

Then her guards hit me and threw me back into the street.

MOTHER

Her guards?

ALADDIN

She's a Princess.

MOTHER

I'm sure she's very nice.

ALADDIN

Ma, she's the Princess. The Emperor's daughter.

MOTHER

Oh.

ALADDIN

This is big, Ma; this is serious. I have to marry her.

MOTHER

A Princess.

ALADDIN

She's perfect.

MOTHER

How will you marry a Princess?

ALADDIN

I thought about that.

MOTHER

You're not royalty.

ALADDIN

I wasn't going to let them know that.

MOTHER

Is this because of your uncle?

ALADDIN

Uncle? No. Has he been back?

MOTHER

I haven't seen him.

ALADDIN

You know what? In a way he has helped me out. You're going to help me, too.

MOTHER

Is that what you think?

ALADDIN

Oh, you've got to, Ma. You just have to. You've got to go to the Emperor.

MOTHER

The Emperor?

ALADDIN

You're the parents; you've got to ask on my behalf. You arrange it.

MOTHER

Aladdin, no....

ALADDIN

Yes, Ma!

MOTHER

I can't go to the Palace. I've never been to the Palace.

ALADDIN

It's OK, Ma.

MOTHER

I barely leave the house!

ALADDIN

Fumbling with his bag, taking out the lamp and putting it aside:

It's OK, Ma. Here's what we're gonna do. You're going to go out, take that money we earned from the dishes, and you're going to go out and buy yourself the best dress you can find. Then, you're going to take these....

He uncovers the sack and reveals the gemstones.

MOTHER

Jewels!

ALADDIN

This is what me and my uncle found in the cave. What we're gonna do with it is make it a gift for the Emperor. A tribute. It proves we're serious. It proves I can handle a Princess.

MOTHER

Oh, Aladdin....

ALADDIN

And I can, Ma. This can work.

MOTHER

But Aladdin....

ALADDIN

Don't worry, Ma; go out and get yourself something nice.

MOTHER

Last week you never had a job.

ALADDIN

And next week I'll have a Princess.

He hands her the jewels. She takes them, gives her son a look, and exits. ALADDIN watches her go. After a moment, GENIE enters.

I sold the plates. I saw the Princess. And I'll win her.

GENIE

It's so easy, isn't it?

ALADDIN

You've never been in love, have you?

GENIE

Is that what you think?

ALADDIN

You'd know. Trust me. More than anything you'd know.

He gets up and starts to exit. He looks at GENIE.

You stay put.

Lights fade on the kitchen. Spotlight on the WAZIR'S SON and the PRINCESS. They sit, the PRINCESS facing out and the WAZIR'S SON staring at her. After a moment, the PRINCESS exits. The WAZIR'S SON watches her go, takes a deep breath, then:

WAZIR'S SON

In one breath:

Your highness I humbly request the hand of your daughter in the bonds of holy matrimony.

Beat.

I said it. I can do this.

He starts offstage, but stops himself.

"...request the hand of your daughter in the bonds..." Is that too forceful? No.... No, I have to be forceful. I have to be a husband. Bound. Bound to me. My wife; my possession. Your highness, I must have the hand of your daughter in the bonds of holy matrimony! OK! I'm ready! I—

ALADDIN'S MOTHER has entered.

Excuse me?

MOTHER

Yes?

WAZIR'S SON

This is a private antechamber.

MOTHER

The Emperor's; yes.

WAZIR'S SON

You want an audience with the Emperor? Ma'am?

MOTHER

I did—

WAZIR'S SON

Let me tell you, his royal omnipotence is incredibly busy. May I ask what your visit concerns?

MOTHER

Marriage.

WAZIR'S SON

Marriage? Find a judge.

MOTHER

For his daughter.

WAZIR'S SON

His daughter? Not the Princess.

MOTHER

Yes. My son sent me to arrange things with the Emperor—

WAZIR'S SON

Overlapping:

No....

MOTHER

—make it official. Yes.

WAZIR'S SON

He would never. The Princess hasn't seen another man.

MOTHER

My son met her.

WAZIR'S SON

Fantasy! Ma'am, your story is unbelievable. It's a waste of my time and would be the same for the Emperor. I'm sorry, but I cannot allow you the meeting.

MOTHER

But I've had the meeting.

WAZIR'S SON

What?

MOTHER

He said yes.

She exits and the lights fade. Lights again rise on the kitchen. GENIE sits. ALADDIN stands in front of him. Reluctantly, ALADDIN hands him a list. GENIE scans the list.

GENIE

Reading:

Forty white slave girls....

ALADDIN

You can read it quiet.

GENIE

And forty black eunuchs! There's a chore....

ALADDIN

I know, all right? Don't think I didn't try to do this myself.

GENIE

I would never doubt you.

ALADDIN

Good.

GENIE

Though I would have loved to see your efforts. Running across the city, trying to find foreign slaves as if they were loose change.

ALADDIN

It's not funny.

GENIE

This is a tall order, even for a conquering warrior prince, or whatever lies your mother told about you.

ALADDIN

This is what the Emperor wants.

GENIE

It's extortion. It's the bride's father that pays the dowry.

ALADDIN

The way I figure it, the Emperor thinks that if I can provide him with servants, then I can provide his daughter with the armies to protect her. Something along those lines.

GENIE

He wants you to spoil her.

ALADDIN

Something like that, yeah.

GENIE

And this you wanted to do as a tailor's son.

ALADDIN

It's who I am.

GENIE

And every good boy deserves a Princess.

ALADDIN

We deserve each other.

GENIE

Let's hear her say that. You're far outside anything she knows.

ALADDIN

I'm an outsider, period. You think anyone here respects God? The Prophet? A girl on the next block is just as different to me as the Princess. I've got a line to cross anyway.

GENIE

And slaves to collect.

ALADDIN

Even talking to you is crossing a line. It's blasphemy.

GENIE

But you won't get a Princess without me. I'm always amazed by you monotheists. I'm sitting in front of you and I'm less real to you than God. Your imagination.

ALADDIN

Stop.

GENIE

Wait until you're as old as I am, then give it another thought.

ALADDIN

Can you do it?

GENIE

Eighty slaves? I can.

ALADDIN

I thought you just carried things on the wind. How can you just find slaves?

GENIE

Shipwrecks, fading empires. There are ways.

ALADDIN

And you can make me their master?

GENIE

You should be used to it.

ALADDIN

Yeah, you'd like that.

GENIE

So this list, this is your wish?

ALADDIN

You want to gloat? You want me to admit you've won? Well you've won.

GENIE

I'm still the guy in chains.

ALADDIN

Right.

GENIE

And what happens to this soul you think you have?

ALADDIN

What happens to it without her?

GENIE

I hope she's worth it.

ALADDIN

She's beautiful.

MOTHER enters.

MOTHER

Aladdin! The wedding.

ALADDIN

It's on, Mom. Tomorrow morning the Emperor will get his request.

MOTHER

But the wedding's today!

ALADDIN

What wedding?

MOTHER

The Princess. She's marrying someone else!

Noticing GENIE.

Who's this?

ALADDIN

Don't worry, Mom. How can there be a wedding? You were just there the other day.

MOTHER

It was all of a sudden. I heard celebration at the palace. She's marrying the son of someone in the court.

ALADDIN

An insider.

MOTHER

The Emperor took your gift. He was impressed! And he asked for more. Why would he change his mind?

ALADDIN

Inside pressure. A rich stranger's mother shows up and suddenly they have to make a move.

MOTHER

I tried getting in the palace, but it's closed off. By now the wedding might be over. I'm sorry, Aladdin.

ALADDIN

Thanks, Ma.

MOTHER

You'll find another Princess.

She exits. ALADDIN turns to GENIE.

ALADDIN

Another guy!

GENIE

Guess so.

ALADDIN

She can't love him.

GENIE

Who needs love?

ALADDIN

She's mine! I can't lose her.

GENIE

You have; wedding's over.

ALADDIN

Not the wedding night. I can't let him touch her. I've got to get to the palace. I'll sneak in—

GENIE

Guards.

ALADDIN

I'll get past them. I'll make my way to their chambers—

GENIE

More guards.

ALADDIN

That's not important. I'll get to her chambers and throw her husband off the balcony.

GENIE

In front of the Princess.

ALADDIN

She'll still love me.

GENIE

You met this Princess just once, right?

ALADDIN

All I needed.

GENIE

And what did you say to each other?

ALADDIN

Nothing. Eye contact. That's all we had.

GENIE

For eye contact, you're meant to be.

ALADDIN

I have to go.

GENIE

Have fun murdering.

ALADDIN

All right, Spirit. What do you suggest?

GENIE

It's time for a wish. And not the slaves, either.

ALADDIN

So you want to kill the groom?

GENIE

I had something else in mind.

ALADDIN

What? Tell me; I'll do it.

GENIE

It's not something for you to do, Master. You have to let me do my work.

ALADDIN

No, no. Up until now, I did it all myself.

GENIE

With the jewels I gave my former master. And the finery I set on your table. You've been caught up with me since you first picked up my lamp.

ALADDIN

It's a deal with the Devil.

GENIE

You'd think so. Awfully convenient for you, your God. You credit him with all these powers. But those of us that can actually do what you call miracles—we're devils.

ALADDIN

Aren't you?

GENIE

And it's so sweet that you can live in a nation of infidels, spend your entire life here—fall in love with a heathen—

ALADDIN

You shut up!

GENIE, now unable to speak, smiles and bows. A beat.

What are you doing?

Another beat.

Are you doing that because I asked or because—I commanded?

GENIE smiles.

You can speak.

GENIE

You're the Master.

ALADDIN

This is wrong.

GENIE

It's very wrong. I shouldn't spend eternity inside a lamp.

ALADDIN

You're tempting me.

GENIE

I'm laying out the facts. Wealth, slaves—they're nothing to me. But they seem to be everything to the in-laws. You've already commanded me to grant a few of your wishes.

ALADDIN

I've already sold my soul.

GENIE

I think you're the first of my masters to have a soul to begin with. And you're doing this for love. Your soul's just fine. Are you royalty?

ALADDIN

Are you kidding?

GENIE

You are royalty. If you want to be. It's all in how you present yourself, in how you think about your place in the world. You need to stop thinking of yourself as a child. Start thinking of yourself as someone who commands an army. Because you do.

ALADDIN

You can get her?

GENIE

I think so.

ALADDIN

You can break up this marriage?

GENIE

You want me to do it?

ALADDIN

Yes.

GENIE

As you wish.

ALADDIN

And the list.

GENIE turns.

For the Emperor.

GENIE

I will obey.

ALADDIN

So...what are you going to do?

GENIE

Your competitor is going to come here. Then we're going to talk.

ALADDIN

Talk, huh?

GENIE

Wait until tonight.

Lights fade as the sun sets. It is a calm night outside. Until the wind brings the PRINCESS's bed through the window. She and the WAZIR'S SON are dressed for bed. As the bed lands in the kitchen, GENIE grabs the WAZIR'S SON, pinning him to the wall. The bed comes to a stop, whirling the PRINCESS so she is face to face with ALADDIN.

PRINCESS

Dorothy Gale:

Oh.

ALADDIN

Princess.

PRINCESS

I've seen you before. What are you doing in my bedroom?

ALADDIN

Smiles, looks around:

Your bedroom?

PRINCESS

Who are you?

ALADDIN

The boy of your dreams. So dream.

ALADDIN nods at GENIE. GENIE extends an arm and blows around the PRINCESS. She falls asleep. ALADDIN looks at her.

Like an angel.

He turns to the WAZIR'S SON.

You won't disturb that. She isn't yours.

The WAZIR'S SON struggles.

You won't touch her. You're going to her father tomorrow morning to call things off.

WAZIR'S SON

I won't.

ALADDIN

Then we'll do this again tomorrow. Same thing every night.

WAZIR'S SON

Ridiculous.

ALADDIN

You took her from me! I had her hand. Your marriage came in the middle of that. It has no validity.

WAZIR'S SON

Validity? Who are you? You came from nowhere. You bring your thugs—kidnap royalty. You think that's legitimate? Where are we, anyway?

ALADDIN

Someplace you'll never be found.

WAZIR'S SON

This isn't convincing. Threats—you're threatening—I wouldn't trust you with my wife. I have to protect her.

GENIE flips the WAZIR'S SON upside-down on the wall.

ALADDIN

Protect her? Look at you.

WAZIR'S SON

You're the one that needs hired muscle. If you didn't have this guy I could take you.

ALADDIN

But I have this guy. He's useful.

GENIE drops the WAZIR'S SON.

ALADDIN

Let's hear you say it.

The WAZIR'S SON gives no response.

ALADDIN (cont.)

The marriage was a mistake. You're calling it off.

The WAZIR'S SON sits up. Suddenly, he makes a dash for the PRINCESS. ALADDIN swats him down with the flat end of a sword. The WAZIR'S SON freezes.

Touch her and you die.

WAZIR'S SON

I'd die in her arms.

ALADDIN

You'd be dead before you reached them. Don't get blood on my bride.

ALADDIN leads the WAZIR'S SON away from the PRINCESS with the sword.

You live in the palace?

Again, the WAZIR'S SON doesn't respond.

You grew up there. You've watched the Princess grow up. She became a woman when you became a man. Together. You've seen her. And you've never seen anything special.

WAZIR'S SON

That's presumptuous.

ALADDIN

I believe in love at first sight. I only believe in love at first sight! The Princess and I have it. You don't.

WAZIR'S SON

Convenient of you to say so.

ALADDIN

True love is right away. True love doesn't wait for somebody else to propose. True love knows.

WAZIR'S SON

True love carries a sword.

GENIE claps a hand on the WAZIR'S SON's shoulder.

GENIE

You love her?

WAZIR'S SON

Yes.

GENIE

Would you rather die than lose her?

WAZIR'S SON

I...haven't thought about it.

GENIE

To ALADDIN:

He needs time to think.

ALADDIN nods. GENIE pats the bed.

To the WAZIR'S SON:

Hop on.

He complies. He looks at the PRINCESS, then GENIE.

Be good.

Wind rushes as the bed ascends and flies out of the kitchen. Lights fade. Spotlight on the MAGICIAN. He is alone, drinking.

MAGICIAN

Two genies. Air spirits. One powerful male. One enchanting female. Both claim to have found the most beautiful human beings on earth. They each wager their freedom to each other. If she's right, she wins him. If not, he wins her. The test: love at first sight. They place the beauties next to each other. Whichever one falls in love first loses.

Laughs:

That's how it is, right?

Drinks:

Who won? I forget who she said. They canceled the wager, I know that. But she didn't talk about her beautiful prince and his beautiful princess. Their test subjects, human beings who fell in love with each other. What happened to them? Because love at first sight is more than a dream. They wouldn't let it go. They'd do anything to find each other.

Beat.

A student of beauty, and she didn't give any thought to true love. I like to think they found each other.

Spotlight slowly rises on ALADDIN and the PRINCESS, in wedding garments. They kiss.

If it was true love, I'd like to think they married and had many beautiful babies.

Lights fade on the couple.

I never should have thrown her away.

He takes another drink as his spotlight fades. Lights up on a desert island. Waves crash—there is nothing in sight but sunlight, sand, and vegetation. Suddenly, an ASTRONAUT stumbles over the dune, overheated and exhausted. He makes it to center and collapses. Flat on the sand, he notices something. He begins to dig. After a moment, the ASTRONAUT finds something in the sand and holds it up—a bottle. Lights fade. End of Act I.

Act II

A band of light from one side of the stage to another. A cart begins a path across the stage, pushed by the MAGICIAN. The cart is filled with metal and silver objects—mostly lamps.

MAGICIAN

Illumination! The sun gives it to you all day, every day. But every night, the sun goes down. What do you do then? If you don't have a lamp, you're out of luck! You sit in the dark. You want a lamp. I'll sell you a lamp. You already have a lamp? Trade it for a new one! New lamps for old! Can't beat that! We're all looking for our own light in the dark. I've got yours. Illumination!

The MAGICIAN exits and the stage goes dark. Suddenly—distant rumbling. The sky brightens and a column of smoke fills the background. Lights up full reveal JEANNIE—now in twentieth century fashion—standing with an Air Force MAJOR. This is the ASTRONAUT from the previous act. They stand on a picnic blanket, staring into the distance at the smoke. As the rumbling subsides, JEANNIE turns to the MAJOR.

JEANNIE

Beautiful.

The MAJOR turns to JEANNIE. He kisses her.

MAJOR

It always is. I was afraid you might not like it.

JEANNIE

Oh, master, why wouldn't I like the launch?

MAJOR

Look at the smoke. Our rocket has burned a black line onto a blue sky. We're intruding. That's where your winds are.

JEANNIE

That's true.

MAJOR

And it's such a nice sky.

JEANNIE

The winds aren't as fragile as you make them sound, master. Already they're breaking your black line apart.

MAJOR

Fair enough. The sky is beautiful on its own.

The MAJOR sits on the blanket, bringing JEANNIE to the ground with him.

JEANNIE

What's it like up there?

MAJOR

You're asking me this?

JEANNIE

You're an astronaut; I'm not.

MAJOR

You've been high into the atmosphere. Repeatedly.

JEANNIE

But you've been higher. What's space like?

MAJOR

It's just like where you've been. Just up.

JEANNIE

You've seen the entire earth in one glance. You've watched the sun rise and set in ways I'll never see.

MAJOR

I've also crashed.

JEANNIE

Isn't that an American tradition? Getting into a wreck now and then?

MAJOR

Not with taxpayer dollars.

JEANNIE

Oh, nonsense. Besides, that was years ago.

MAJOR

Over five years ago.

JEANNIE

Five years. We didn't celebrate.

MAJOR

Missed our anniversary.

JEANNIE

Oh, master, it is an anniversary. We need to do something.

MAJOR

We can go back to the island where we met.

JEANNIE

Master, I don't ever want to go back there.

MAJOR

Or we could go into orbit.

JEANNIE

There's no wind up there for me.

MAJOR

NASA's always recruiting.

JEANNIE

It's supposed to be a celebration! We shouldn't be working. How many geishas should we have?

MAJOR

Now, Jeannie, for you that's working.

JEANNIE

Oh, it isn't; not really.

MAJOR

It's enough; I don't want to spend an evening wishing up servants or travel plans or anything like that, and I don't want you to feel like that's what you have to do for me. You already tried to take me skiing Friday.

JEANNIE

It would have been wonderful. You wanted it.

MAJOR

I don't think you can read my mind as well as you think.

JEANNIE

I'm not mind reading. It's January; you told me you were tired of Florida, of so many Januarys without snow.

MAJOR

Jeannie, there's what I say, and what I want.

JEANNIE

So I've learned. Well, five years. What do you want for it?

MAJOR

I will pick up a phone and call a restaurant. You will wear your new dress. We will have a pleasant dinner.

JEANNIE

Yes, Major.

A smile.

It sounds magical.

MAJOR

You're so clever....

The MAJOR moves to kiss JEANNIE. She stops him.

JEANNIE

Calling out:

Can we help you?

MAJOR

A quick look around, then, to JEANNIE:

Someone's here?

After a moment, an AIR FORCE LIEUTENANT takes a step onto the stage. The MAJOR and JEANNIE rise from the blanket.

LIEUTENANT

Major?

MAJOR

Lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT

Approaching:

Major; I thought that was you. I couldn't tell all the way from the viewing platform. What brings you out here?

They shake hands.

MAJOR

The view's better. Lieutenant, have you met Jeannie?

LIEUTENANT

I haven't. It's nice to meet you.

JEANNIE

You work with the Major?

LIEUTENANT

Not enough. We've been on separate assignments for a while now. Not since you played Robinson Crusoe, in fact!

MAJOR

That's right.

LIEUTENANT

Jeannie, do you know this story? His rocket failed. The Major never made it into orbit. He dropped into the ocean—onto a desert island. And he made it back in one piece. Amazing.

JEANNIE

I know the story.

LIEUTENANT

Oh, right; if I were the Major I'd tell it, too.

MAJOR

Telling it is fine. I'd rather not relive it, though.

LIEUTENANT

Understandably, sir. Still, it gives me confidence.

MAJOR

In NASA?

LIEUTENANT

Yes, sir. But also in humanity. We aim for the stars, and even when we miss, we get right back up. You've been back into space since then, haven't you?

MAJOR

Yes; several times.

LIEUTENANT

There you go. You, Major, are proof of accomplishment. That humanity has grown up.

The LIEUTENANT looks at JEANNIE.

LIEUTENANT (cont.)

I'm sorry; I'm rambling on so much....

He takes off his hat and holds it with both hands.

JEANNIE

It's a nice thought.

MAJOR

A lot of pressure on me, though.

JEANNIE

You can take it.

LIEUTENANT

I'm glad I met you here, Major. What are you working on right now?

MAJOR

Besides humanity?

LIEUTENANT

Oh, very much in addition to it. The Doctor tells me you've got quite a few secrets you're not sharing.

MAJOR

Lieutenant, look at this sky. We just removed three men from this Earth. They'll be back, but right now we don't share a planet with them. We don't even share a sky; they're somewhere beyond this gorgeous Florida weather.

He approaches the LIEUTENANT.

The Doctor has a conspiratorial mind. He can't help it. Any real secrets I have are part of the same chain of command he follows. And you as well.

LIEUTENANT

I understand completely, Major.

MAJOR

Let's talk about something else.

LIEUTENANT

How about gorgeous Florida weather?

MAJOR

There's a reason we don't launch spacecraft from North Dakota.

LIEUTENANT

Seventy degrees in January. We're spoiled. It's been like this all week, hasn't it?

MAJOR

Sure.

LIEUTENANT

Except for Friday, I think. What was the weather that day?

MAJOR

Sunny.

LIEUTENANT

Really?

MAJOR

It's a good guess.

LIEUTENANT

It was sunny. Mostly.

MAJOR

Mostly sunny.

LIEUTENANT

No; that's not what I mean.

JEANNIE

With a hand to her mouth:

Oh.

The MAJOR and LIEUTENANT both give JEANNIE looks.

LIEUTENANT

I was driving the Doctor home; he lives on your block, Major. And we saw snow. A full snowstorm, falling only on your front lawn.

MAJOR

Interesting.

LIEUTENANT

I asked the Doctor what that was. He thought you might have an explanation.

MAJOR

Explanation? I didn't even see it happen. I don't think something like that is even possible.

JEANNIE

It's possible.

More looks.

JEANNIE (cont.)

If you move enough wet air into cold air—and you can make sure it stays below freezing all the way down—you can make it snow almost anywhere.

LIEUTENANT

Can you?

MAJOR

A laugh:

I wouldn't know. I don't know the recipe.

LIEUTENANT

Major, I think you do.

MAJOR

What does that—?

LIEUTENANT

I think you can control the weather. I think you can make it snow in Florida.

MAJOR

Is that what you came out here for? Did the Doctor send you?

LIEUTENANT

No; Major—

MAJOR

When you take the Doctor's word on something, you have to know his opinion of me. He's questioned me too many times—

LIEUTENANT

Major, this isn't about the Doctor. It's about my wife.

MAJOR

I thought it was about snow.

LIEUTENANT

My wife grew up in China. Not too far from the capital, but still in a village. Her brother is a farmer. They're going through a terrible drought right now, Major. Crops are dying. People are starving. Mandy has been a wreck.

A beat.

When I saw your house, I—I don't know what I was thinking. I thought you might be able to help him. Change the weather for him.

MAJOR

Nobody can change the weather.

LIEUTENANT

I thought, "Air Force, NASA—maybe the Major has something...." I'm sorry.

MAJOR

Don't be.

LIEUTENANT

I saw what I wanted to see. And I dragged you into it.

MAJOR

It's OK, Lieutenant. I wish I could help.

JEANNIE

To the LIEUTENANT:

Your wife's village; it's near Beijing?

LIEUTENANT

About fifty miles to the west, yeah.

MAJOR

I'm sorry, did I ask for something?

JEANNIE

I thought so.

MAJOR

Is that really the best thing to do?

JEANNIE

It's already done.

A thunderclap and the beginning of a major rainstorm. The three look up.

LIEUTENANT

Gorgeous Florida weather.

Lights fade. Spotlight on a doorway. The MAGICIAN pulls a tarp over his cart of lamps, fighting the wind and rain.

MAGICIAN

All right, all right. So much metal. So much potential rust. Stay covered; I don't want to lose my stock.

A light appears in a nearby window. The MAGICIAN stops. The PRINCESS steps through the door, carrying the lamp.

PRINCESS

How's business?

MAGICIAN

Smiles:

Business is outstanding. If you're the guy selling tarps.

PRINCESS

Or umbrellas. You're in the wrong kind of work.

MAGICIAN

I like it.

PRINCESS

What's the merchandise? What are you covering up?

MAGICIAN

Lamps.

PRINCESS

Not the best weather for those right now.

MAGICIAN

I like them. Lamps are bright. More than that. They provide style, decoration, sentimentality.

PRINCESS

I didn't know you could sell sentiment.

MAGICIAN

I sell the seeds. Light is a necessity; part of our diet. We consume it just like food and water. So why not consume something fine? Something special. Something that comforts you.

PRINCESS

That's quite a sales pitch.

MAGICIAN

You're young.

PRINCESS

Am I?

MAGICIAN

You live at the palace.

PRINCESS

I do.

MAGICIAN

It's a good example. This palace went up overnight.

PRINCESS

Not literally.

MAGICIAN

Literally. Built in a day. Believe me, I paid attention.

PRINCESS

It was fast—

MAGICIAN

Very.

PRINCESS

—I'll give you that.

MAGICIAN

You haven't lived here long. No one has. An overnight palace has no age. It has no history, no style.

PRINCESS

Is that a problem?

MAGICIAN

Only at first. You have to let it develop its style.

PRINCESS

Plant the seeds of sentimentality.

MAGICIAN

Always.

PRINCESS

The seeds you sell.

MAGICIAN

Of course. And thank you. I'm a businessman and you're treating me like one. I like that respect. Now, the lamp you're carrying—what's that to you?

PRINCESS

Nothing.

MAGICIAN

Terrible.

PRINCESS

I've wondered if it's something to my husband.

MAGICIAN

How?

PRINCESS

He keeps it unlit. There's never a wick or oil in it unless I fill it. I'm careful with it; I only touch it by the handle.

MAGICIAN

You think you should protect it?

PRINCESS

I think it might fall apart. My husband doesn't really touch it at all. Yet he keeps it at his bedside.

MAGICIAN

It's old.

PRINCESS

Not so old it's an antique. I don't think it means anything. But I have a guess.

The MAGICIAN gives her a look: continue.

My husband has an appreciation for the poor. He goes places. I think he may have grown up poor.

MAGICIAN

So he may associate the lamp with a lost childhood. Junk in the palace.

PRINCESS

He might. I don't know. I don't know enough about him.

MAGICIAN

But you love him?

PRINCESS

He's the most beautiful boy in the world.

MAGICIAN

So now we have three possibilities. Three ways of thinking about this lamp. One, the lamp is something your husband cares about. Something that connects him to a poor past.

PRINCESS

Yes; I don't know.

MAGICIAN

Two, it's just an old, overlooked, barely usable lamp. It showed up in your bedroom and that's it.

He turns.

PRINCESS

And three?

MAGICIAN

Producing another lamp:

Three, you trade it in for a new lamp. One without a history. Let it grow up in a new palace that will gain new memories.

PRINCESS

I see.

MAGICIAN

Also, you're married. This is sentimental to him.

PRINCESS

I don't even know if it is.

MAGICIAN

Right; it might be a hidden history, or it's nothing at all. Either way it's not yours. A new lamp belongs to the both of you.

Beat.

It's the hard sell; I'm sorry. Please, you can slam the door in my face—

PRINCESS

No. No. I'll make the trade. A new lamp for this one.

MAGICIAN

You won't be disappointed with the illumination. I can promise you.

PRINCESS

And the sentiment?

MAGICIAN

You and your husband are on your own.

PRINCESS

Taking the new lamp:

Look at this. This isn't a fair trade. How much do I owe you?

MAGICIAN

Consider it a wedding present, your highness.

She smiles.

MAGICIAN (cont.)

You opened the door, I expected guards.

PRINCESS

I don't need them. Here; your lamp.

MAGICIAN

You're too kind.

PRINCESS

Can you sell it?

MAGICIAN

Some people want old things just because they're old.

PRINCESS

True.

MAGICIAN

Incidentally, does your husband wear a ring? Before the marriage. Did he wear one?

PRINCESS

No. Do you deal in rings?

MAGICIAN

I used to. I stopped. I shouldn't have.

PRINCESS

I thought you'd like jewelry more. There's always sentiment.

MAGICIAN

Isn't there?

He lifts his cart.

You should be someplace dry.

PRINCESS

What about you? The storm hasn't let up.

MAGICIAN

My cart is fine. And right now I don't mind getting wet.

PRINCESS

Really?

MAGICIAN

If I get sick of it, I'll make it stop.

PRINCESS

That would be impressive.

MAGICIAN

Smiling:

Goodnight, my Princess.

The MAGICIAN walks offstage. The PRINCESS watches him go. After a few moments, evening sunshine. Lights fade. A spotlight on JEANNIE. She wears a modern evening gown and looks into a mirror. She regards her image and begins putting on makeup and jewelry. Another spotlight rises elsewhere on the MAGICIAN in conference with GENIE.

MAGICIAN

How strong are you?

GENIE

Very.

MAGICIAN

You can fight an army?

GENIE

Yes.

MAGICIAN

You can lift buildings?

GENIE

Yes.

MAGICIAN

I mean not brick by brick. You can lift it all once?

GENIE

Yes.

JEANNIE puts on a pair of heels.

MAGICIAN

And you can carry it—transport it on the winds—you can take it anywhere?

GENIE

I can.

MAGICIAN

Are you the strongest?

GENIE

The strongest of what?

MAGICIAN

Out of all the spirits, is there anyone stronger than you?

JEANNIE is dissatisfied. She takes off the heels.

GENIE

No. Not that I've met.

MAGICIAN

And I'm your master. The strongest man in the world.

GENIE

My masters like to think of themselves that way. I've had many masters.

MAGICIAN

You can't threaten me. I know how this works. I keep you close and I have nothing to worry about.

GENIE

If you say so, Master.

The MAJOR appears behind JEANNIE, still in his uniform. He kisses her neck.

JEANNIE

I stopped the rain.

MAJOR

In China?

JEANNIE

It's not much, but it should be enough.

MAJOR

You're wonderful. I don't deserve you.

JEANNIE

Of course you do.

MAJOR

No, I've made you dress up for nothing.

JEANNIE

What?

MAJOR

I've been called to the base. I'm sorry; doctor's orders. Will you be hungry later? Can we push the reservation to 9:30?

JEANNIE

I can wait.

MAJOR

I'm sorry.

JEANNIE

Don't be.

MAJOR

You look gorgeous.

JEANNIE

You look overdressed.

The MAJOR smiles, blows a kiss, and exits. JEANNIE returns to the mirror.

MAGICIAN

Can you bring her back?

GENIE

Who?

MAGICIAN

If I need someone, can you find them and bring them back?

GENIE

Sometimes. If I find a person, I can bring them back.

MAGICIAN

Just people, or can you find spirits?

GENIE

I'm not sure there are any left to find.

MAGICIAN

There's one. At least one. You must know her. She's beautiful. Do you know her?

GENIE

I do.

MAGICIAN

Can you find her? I command you to find her.

GENIE

I've looked.

MAGICIAN

Look again.

JEANNIE picks up her heels and makeup.

GENIE

I'm always looking. I haven't found her.

MAGICIAN

I thought you could hear every whisper on the wind.

JEANNIE exits.

GENIE

She's not whispering.

The spotlights fade. Lights up on ALADDIN'S kitchen. The doorway is boarded up. ALADDIN bursts into the house, breaking the planks over the door, dressed as a Prince. He looks around. He squats, peering under the table and cabinets. He catches a glint of something, lies down, and grabs it from under a cabinet. It is an overlooked gold saucer. ALADDIN holds it and cries.

ALADDIN

I lost it. I lost it....

He throws the platter to the ground. It skids to the stove. He looks at it, walks over, and begins sifting through the ash, dirtying his outfit. But he soon finds it: the ring. ALADDIN puts it on and rubs his hands together. JEANNIE appears, dressed identically to her outfit underground.

JEANNIE

Master.

ALADDIN stares at her, wiping his tears.

ALADDIN

You like seeing this, huh?

JEANNIE

You changed your outfit.

ALADDIN

You started all of this, just so you could get a laugh.

JEANNIE

You summoned me.

ALADDIN

This is all a plot, you see. To make me trust you. To make me reliant. No; uh-uh. You're going to bring her back.

JEANNIE

I'll obey you, Master. Who is it?

ALADDIN

Who— Don't you know?

JEANNIE

You kept me in the ring. I know nothing since the last time I saw you.

ALADDIN gets up, circling JEANNIE.

ALADDIN

No. You know I can't believe that. This has been a scam right from the start. You give her to me, then you take her away!

JEANNIE

A girl?

ALADDIN

Yeah, OK; yeah. A girl. I'm a Prince now.

JEANNIE

Congratulations.

ALADDIN

The Crown Prince. I married the Emperor's daughter.

JEANNIE

And she's gone. This is what—

ALADDIN

Yes.

JEANNIE

—you blame me for. I don't know why.

ALADDIN

That's your plan, right? You find somebody poor. Somebody a little bit different. Desperate. You promise them things. So I end up a Prince. Just for a little while. Then one day it's all gone. She's gone.

JEANNIE

It's happened to masters before.

ALADDIN

Fine. I'll give it to you.

He looks around.

You want it in writing? I'll sign it over, right now.

JEANNIE

This isn't about your soul!

ALADDIN

I'll sign it over; just bring her back!

JEANNIE

Master....

ALADDIN

Bring her back. Bring her to me!

JEANNIE

I don't know her. I don't know who I'm looking for.

ALADDIN

You'll find her. I'll make you. Come on, you demon; how hard can it be to find a brand-new castle lifted out of the city?

JEANNIE

You had a castle that was...lifted.

ALADDIN

Yeah; easy come, easy go. That's what you want to say?

JEANNIE

You had a lamp.

ALADDIN

So you know the guy.

JEANNIE

He can lift a castle.

ALADDIN

Of course he can; he built it. But now I see what you and your friend in the lamp are doing. You made me a fugitive; her father thinks I killed her.

JEANNIE

My friend is a slave like I am. It sounds like he belonged to you. Maybe now he belongs to someone else. We need to find him.

ALADDIN

He betrayed me....

JEANNIE

He couldn't.

ALADDIN

...Just like you.

JEANNIE

Exactly like me. I need to see him. We both do.

ALADDIN

All right, that's a start. Where do we find him?

JEANNIE

I'd give anything to know that.

ALADDIN

Start looking, then.

He shakes his head.

I don't know why my Uncle had you. He must have known. I thought, he believed, you know? Living right by God. Instead he had a demon.

JEANNIE

I don't think I knew your Uncle.

ALADDIN

Maybe he never used you, but he knew. And all the things he's done. He made the hadj three times. I don't even know if that's something I'll ever be able to do.

JEANNIE

Mecca? We could leave now.

ALADDIN

No way; no demon is going someplace so holy.

JEANNIE

Demon. Is that what your pious Uncle thought of me?

ALADDIN

I don't know. I think he just wanted to get rid of you.

Beat.

JEANNIE

Master. Your Uncle, is he Chinese?

ALADDIN

He's African, I think. And a Muslim.

JEANNIE

He sent you after the lamp.

ALADDIN

Yeah.

JEANNIE

That's the expedition he had planned.

ALADDIN

So you did talk to my—

JEANNIE

We're going to Africa.

ALADDIN

I just said we're not going to Mecca.

JEANNIE

No; Morocco. Your Uncle's home.

ALADDIN

He took the lamp?

JEANNIE

The lamp, your palace, your Princess. I'm sure of it.

ALADDIN

But why dig up another spirit when he had you?

JEANNIE

He got tired of me.

ALADDIN

You're not strong.

JEANNIE

We'll find him, you'll take back the lamp, and he'll be beaten. He's a sorcerer, too. He can do things for us.

ALADDIN

What do I need him for?

JEANNIE

We should go.

ALADDIN

That so? I thought I gave the commands.

JEANNIE

So you do.

She folds her arms and waits.

ALADDIN

Shrugs:

To Morocco.

Wind picks up and the lights fade. Spotlight on a chair. The MAJOR sits; he is restrained. He begins to wake as the DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR

Good morning, Major!

MAJOR

Oh, Doctor, hello. Is it morning?

DOCTOR

It is. We've had to keep you overnight, I'm afraid.

MAJOR

You have?

DOCTOR

Is that a problem.

MAJOR

I had dinner plans.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry.

MAJOR

Is anything wrong? I didn't feel sick. I'm not sure why—

He notices he has been restrained. He looks around.

MAJOR (cont.)

I'm not familiar with this part of the base, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Yes, well you wouldn't be.

MAJOR

What is all this?

DOCTOR

An experiment, Major. An experiment for which I'm proud you've been a participant.

MAJOR

I have?

DOCTOR

You're a very brave officer. You deserve the truth. Even if, for the past few years, you haven't been so truthful with us.

MAJOR

Doctor, I can explain—

DOCTOR

I'm sure you can, Major.

MAJOR

If you think that Jeannie's done anything that—

DOCTOR

Jeannie? I didn't say anything about her.

MAJOR

Doctor, I'm not naive. You've taken an active interest in my home life. More so than with any of the other officers.

DOCTOR

Indeed I have, Major; we all have.

MAJOR

So you'll understand when I tell you that I don't find your experiments all that welcome.

DOCTOR

I do understand.

MAJOR

I'm glad we can trust each other.

The MAJOR lifts his arms, showing off the restraints.

DOCTOR

Coming to the MAJOR:

Oh, I'm sorry about that, Major. Let me get you out of those.

He does.

The restraints were necessary during the procedure. For your own safety.

MAJOR

Procedure. Doctor, what have you done?

DOCTOR

Nothing, Major; nothing beyond our usual routine.

MAJOR

We have a routine?

DOCTOR

Of course.

MAJOR

Doctor, perhaps you'd better explain this experiment to me. Tell me everything.

DOCTOR

Absolutely, Major. A few years ago, shortly before your first trip into orbit, you were recruited into a highly classified Air Force experiment.

MAJOR

No, I wasn't.

DOCTOR

You were. It was highly classified.

The DOCTOR walks to a table and retrieves a medicine bottle filled with a powder.

Major, every week for the past five years, you have been dosed with this hallucinogenic compound.

MAJOR

Every week?

DOCTOR

Every Tuesday night at 7:30.

MAJOR

No....

DOCTOR

We changed the day as necessary from year to year, but treatments for the most part were very—

MAJOR

Doctor. You used mind control drugs on me?

DOCTOR

Major, no. The experiment monitored your mental state. A man in space, hours in isolation, he's an ideal candidate for this treatment. And he can be easily monitored.

MAJOR

And you've been making me hallucinate for five years?

DOCTOR

Over five years; yes. Every week since before your first flight. Your capsule misfired, resulting in your crash on that desert island. A happy accident, trading one type of isolation for another.

MAJOR

Yeah, but I was only on that island for a few hours.

DOCTOR

Were you?

MAJOR

Yes, a rescue ship came as soon as Jean—

The DOCTOR flips pages in a file.

DOCTOR

You met Jeannie shortly after that flight, didn't you? This is when things became...peculiar. You broke off your engagement to the General's daughter. You began to host unusual guests at home. You decorated with interesting items.

MAJOR

Did it begin then? Doctor, I couldn't say.

DOCTOR

For the sake of argument, then. But these domestic changes were Jeannie's doing, right? She's a headstrong, generous woman who has become a great part of your life.

MAJOR

It's all true. Jeannie's everything to me.

DOCTOR

I'm sure, Major. But she doesn't exist.

The MAJOR cracks a smile and shakes his head.

MAJOR

Your treatment, your drugs— You think Jeannie's a hallucination?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid so. You were a man in need, Major. Isolated on an island, under the influence of our experiment, you conjured someone to help.

MAJOR

No, Doctor. This can't make any sense. Jeannie is real! We talk about her all the time.

DOCTOR

Indeed we do.

MAJOR

You've been to my home; you've met her!

DOCTOR

I've met a few women. You've introduced some of them to me as Jeannie.

MAJOR

Some of them?

DOCTOR

They've looked so different, Major. Either she's very good about changing her appearance or I don't think I've met the same woman twice.

MAJOR

She has her own fashion sense, Doctor.

DOCTOR

I'm sure.

MAJOR

And the drugs? Everything you've seen. Everything that Jeannie's done. My life has been illusions?

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, Major.

MAJOR

No; you have been suspicious of me for years. When something unusual happens you always want an explanation.

DOCTOR

Of course, Major. It's an experiment.

MAJOR

Doctor, I have been places: Mount Everest, Hawaiian islands.

DOCTOR

You've disappeared.

MAJOR

No, Doctor—no! I refuse to believe that years of my life—the most important woman in it— It has to be real.

DOCTOR

You have a fantasy, Major. The perfect woman. She's devoted to you. She would do anything for you—even the impossible. It must have seemed very real to you. But there was no magical romance. The only magic comes in this powder.

The MAJOR is silent.

Speaking of which, you've passed, Major. We're cutting off treatment. You've made the experiment a success.

MAJOR

I don't see how I've passed, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Your delusions are localized. Jeannie is the anchor for every one of your fantasies. You've deceived yourself, but you haven't lost your mind.

MAJOR

Except for Jeannie.

DOCTOR

That's hardly the worst symptom, Major. British pilots have suffered worse in similar programs. Some of us thought the treatment would break you.

MAJOR

What did you think?

DOCTOR

Looking at the bottle:

I thought it would do nothing at all.

MAJOR

So how does this end?

DOCTOR

I'm keeping you on, Major. Not as a subject, but as an assistant. There are always more experiments. I want someone I can trust.

MAJOR

So do I. Doctor, I'm going home. To Jeannie.

DOCTOR

You think you'll find her there?

MAJOR

I know I will. She's real.

DOCTOR

Is the woman at home really the Jeannie you think you know? A woman who peppers your life with colorful adventure, granting your every wish? A woman who—on the face of it—turns your life upside-down and brings it

DOCTOR (cont.)

back to normal—regularly? And I can only imagine she does this on a schedule that closely mirrors your visits to this facility. This is what you want to believe?

MAJOR

More than anything.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, Major. I find it easier to believe in the drugs.

A noise from offstage—a man moaning.

And it sounds as though I'll require your assistance sooner than expected. I'm sorry, Major, but for now you won't be going anywhere.

MAJOR

What kind of experiments do you do here, Doctor?

DOCTOR

You're about to become an expert.

The spotlight fades. Another spotlight rises on JEANNIE, standing alone in the desert at night. ALADDIN enters walking backward into the light.

ALADDIN

My palace. That's it; the whole thing.

JEANNIE

Here it is in Morocco.

ALADDIN

He picked it up. My guy; your— The other demon. He's more powerful than I knew.

JEANNIE

Then he's the spirit I know.

ALADDIN

I need a sword.

JEANNIE

No. You won't kill him.

ALADDIN

To threaten him; I need something.

JEANNIE

What good is a weapon against a wind spirit?

ALADDIN is silent.

I have a suggestion. It's less awful, just a bit.

A vial flies into JEANNIE's hand.

You poison your Uncle. You don't have to confront him to do it.

ALADDIN

So you do want to kill him.

JEANNIE

This dose will weaken him, incapacitate him. You'll get the lamp and we'll force him to use his sorcery for us.

ALADDIN

What do you care about my Uncle's sorcery? I thought your friend did all the work, the slaves, the palace, and everything.

JEANNIE

Call it a deal, Master. You'll rule China soon. Thanks to your man in the lamp, you have an Empire. You'll never want for anything. Hundreds of thousands of men under your command can provide more than any spirit could give you.

ALADDIN

You want out.

JEANNIE

It took enchantment to bind us to these objects; it will take someone who knows the same spells to set us free.

ALADDIN

He had you before. He didn't free you then.

JEANNIE

He'll do it. He knows I won't seek revenge.

ALADDIN

Really?

JEANNIE

Really.

Beat.

I'll let you kill him, though. When I'm free.

ALADDIN

What about me? You'd want revenge on all your masters?

JEANNIE

Revenge on you will be: we give you everything you ever want.

ALADDIN

Taking the poison:

Wait here.

JEANNIE

You need me.

ALADDIN

That's an order. Unless you've stopped pretending to be a slave.

JEANNIE

I had hoped to see her.

ALADDIN

Who's her?

JEANNIE

Your wife.

ALADDIN

Yeah, well....

JEANNIE

She must be beautiful.

ALADDIN

Of course. She is everything to me. Everything. She has to be beautiful. You know, you said the same thing about me.

JEANNIE

Centuries ago, I found the world's most beautiful boy. You're the closest thing I've seen since.

ALADDIN

Oh yeah? What happened to him?

JEANNIE

We woke him up next to the most beautiful girl in the world.

ALADDIN

Oh, you set 'em up to get married?

JEANNIE

No. We did it all for a wager. We split them up and expected them to go back to their lives. Instead, they became obsessed. They attacked the servants who claimed they were dreaming, didn't eat, wept uncontrollably. Finally the Prince escaped.

ALADDIN

Did he find her?

JEANNIE

Of course he did; that's what happens in these stories.

ALADDIN

They got married? Lived happily ever after?

JEANNIE

Yes and no. After they got married, they were in a shipwreck. They disappeared, probably drowned. No one from either kingdom saw them again.

ALADDIN

So, what; this is a tragedy? The price of obsession, or some horror story?

JEANNIE

They were in love. Lovers don't always make the best decisions.

ALADDIN

That your advice? I don't buy it.

JEANNIE

Love will destroy you if you let it.

ALADDIN

You just stay here, all right?

ALADDIN exits. JEANNIE stares after him. Lights come up on the MAJOR, standing in their bedroom. He stares at her. After a moment, JEANNIE turns around and sees him.

MAJOR

You haven't worn that in a while.

JEANNIE looks down at her ancient costume.

JEANNIE

I wanted to prove a point.

MAJOR

I stood you up.

JEANNIE

I was angry. I sat alone with the lights out, all dressed up for dinner. Then I thought, maybe I'm not someone who can celebrate together with you. Maybe I am just a servant—

MAJOR

Jeannie....

JEANNIE

She grabs the bottle, holding it out to him.

—And if I am I'd better look the part.

She looks at him.

That was the thinking. I don't know if I'm angry anymore.

The MAJOR hugs JEANNIE tightly.

MAJOR

I can hold you.... I touch you and you're real.

JEANNIE

As real as you wish me to be.

MAJOR

No. Even more.

Beat. The MAJOR still won't let go.

JEANNIE

How was work?

MAJOR

Work doesn't exist. It's...ugly. It's turned ugly.

JEANNIE

Master, something's happened.

MAJOR

Yes.

JEANNIE

Tell me. Let me do something about it.

MAJOR

You can't. Jeannie, they've drugged me.

JEANNIE

Master....

MAJOR

They've made me do things. I don't want that. Jeannie...I don't want you to fade away.

JEANNIE

I won't.

MAJOR

I know that. More than anything, I know that.

JEANNIE

I will be with you. Always. You know how you can tell?

MAJOR

How?

JEANNIE

Command it.

MAJOR

Jeannie, you must stay with me. You must help me through this.

JEANNIE

As you wish.

MAJOR

They're making me do things, Jeannie. The CIA's involved. I'm useful to them.

JEANNIE

I'll stop them.

MAJOR

No.

JEANNIE

I'll help you, though.

MAJOR

Jeannie, I don't tell you I love you. I've told others. The Doctor knows. But I love you.

JEANNIE

Shhh....

MAJOR

Do you love me?

JEANNIE

I love you right now.

MAJOR

That's enough.

JEANNIE

I've loved before. Given myself entirely—

MAJOR

That's more than enough. Jeannie I love you forever. For as much forever as I have.

JEANNIE

I'll love you longer.

MAJOR

Jeannie, they've changed me. I won't be the same when they're done with me. When it's over, I don't know if you could love me.

JEANNIE

I will.

MAJOR

I want to still love you.

JEANNIE

Close your eyes.

MAJOR

I want to love you always....

The MAJOR falls asleep as the lights fade. Lights rise on a balcony in ALADDIN's palace. The PRINCESS stands alone, watching the desert night. The MAGICIAN enters with a blanket.

MAGICIAN

It gets cold at night.

He hands her the blanket.

MAGICIAN (cont.)

Here.

He looks into the desert.

Enjoying the view?

PRINCESS

I've never seen the desert. I've never seen anything but the city.

MAGICIAN

The things the powerful do to their children. Isolation's no good.

PRINCESS

I guess not.

MAGICIAN

Here's a little more of the world. Something to start you out. You see, I travel. I've seen too much of the world, probably. That's still better than isolation.

PRINCESS

Thank you.

MAGICIAN

And looking out the window's not enough. Tomorrow we're going into town. I speak the language; you'll pick up a few words. You'll enjoy it.

PRINCESS

So I'm staying?

MAGICIAN

I'd like you to.

PRINCESS

I thought you wanted the palace.

MAGICIAN

I thought so, too.

PRINCESS

What about my husband?

MAGICIAN

You know he's not a Prince. He's stolen from me and deceived your father.

PRINCESS

I guessed that. I think I've always known.

MAGICIAN

That bothers you?

PRINCESS

No.

MAGICIAN

Why not?

PRINCESS

Because he's beautiful.

MAGICIAN

Amazing.

PRINCESS

It is.

MAGICIAN

You're the beautiful one; a girl like you could get away with murder if you wanted to. I think that's how the male brain works, anyway. Women are beautiful. Men get driven mad by it.

PRINCESS

And you're driven mad?

MAGICIAN

By someone else's beauty; I apologize. You have a beautiful husband—I'll take your word for it—and here you are, completely well-adjusted.

PRINCESS

What made him into a Prince? It was all the lamp?

MAGICIAN

Every bit of it. It was my studies. Your husband's legwork, slightly. All the rest is due to those that control the winds.

PRINCESS

Spirits.

MAGICIAN

You say that lightly. You're Chinese. Your people know that we can find spirits in the water, the sky—everywhere. They're accepted. Your husband and I are different. We follow the Prophet. Any powers outside of human possibility are God's and God's alone.

PRINCESS

Oh. You believe this?

MAGICIAN

I grew up believing it. Spirits that could look me in the eye were demons—or they didn't exist at all. Faith in God was everything.

PRINCESS

This is amusing.

MAGICIAN

This is a faith you married into, and there's truth to it. But I'm not going to ignore what I see. There are spirits in God's world. There's sorcery. And I've made something good out of it.

PRINCESS

You deserve a castle for all your good work.

MAGICIAN

Aladdin shouldn't have a castle or a Princess. I'm simply setting things as they were.

PRINCESS

So noble.

MAGICIAN

Not at all, your Majesty. It's equitable. In practice it's quite the opposite of nobility. I worked for this. He didn't. If your husband has to pay for his fraud—or for the mysterious absence of his wife—so be it.

PRINCESS

Pay how?

MAGICIAN

He caused a castle to mysteriously appear. Now it's gone, and so are you. I wonder what your father thinks about that.

The MAGICIAN stretches.

MAGICIAN (cont.)

So, I figure we wait a few days. The justice system will take its natural course. Then you go home, safe and sound.

PRINCESS

Until then?

MAGICIAN

Make yourself at home.

PRINCESS

I though I was home.

MAGICIAN

In this place? You never believed that.

Beat.

I can't find the ring.

PRINCESS

There isn't one. I told you.

MAGICIAN

If it was still buried I would have found it by now. You say he doesn't wear it. I have searched every inch of this castle. He wouldn't throw it away.

PRINCESS

I've never seen him with it. You're talking about something magical?

MAGICIAN

Like you wouldn't believe.

PRINCESS

Who needs a magic lamp and a magic ring?

MAGICIAN

I just need the ring.

The MAGICIAN starts to leave. He turns.

Your majesty, I'm sorry for what I've done to you. But I really do want to give you your life back. Your life as it should be. Your arrangement with Aladdin is nothing more than an illusion. As the husband of a princess, he doesn't exist. You don't deserve that.

PRINCESS

So I'll go back to my father's palace, shut away from the world, safe and sound.

MAGICIAN

Yes.

PRINCESS

And I won't have to think about that beautiful boy anymore.

MAGICIAN

It's the least I can do.

The MAGICIAN exits. The PRINCESS watches the desert. She closes her eyes and lets the blanket fall from her shoulders. After a moment, she takes two steps over the railing. She stands on the edge, ready to jump. She lifts one foot into the air—just as a grappling hook comes up from below. She looks down.

PRINCESS

Aladdin?

Grunting, ALADDIN pulls himself onto the balcony. He stands, catches his breath, looks at his wife, and kisses her.

ALADDIN

Breaking apart:

Stay quiet.

She nods.

Does he know I'm here?

PRINCESS

No. But he expects you.

ALADDIN

He'll never see me. I have a plan.

PRINCESS

We don't need it. Your rope is here. We'll escape.

ALADDIN

We are not escaping; we're setting things right. This palace is coming back. I'm going to protect you.

PRINCESS

Me? Or is this about a lamp?

He slaps her. Beat.

ALADDIN

You don't think I love you? He lied to you about the lamp. He lied to me. He'll suffer for it. You're going to poison him.

PRINCESS

Me?

ALADDIN

He won't suspect you.

He produces the vial.

The whole thing, into his next meal. We're only free then.

PRINCESS

Aladdin....

ALADDIN

Go to the kitchen.

The PRINCESS exits. Lights fade. Lights up on the MAJOR'S bedroom, darkened for nighttime. Standing alone onstage is a PRISONER. He is barefoot and wears the MAJOR'S jacket over an orange jumpsuit. JEANNIE enters. She stares at him.

JEANNIE

Hello.

The PRISONER looks at her, but does not respond. The MAJOR enters.

MAJOR

Jeannie.

JEANNIE

Master, what's—?

MAJOR

You need to pack.

JEANNIE

Pack?

MAJOR

As much as you can. We're leaving.

JEANNIE

Who is this?

The MAJOR throws two suitcases onto the bed and begins to fill them.

MAJOR

A prisoner.

JEANNIE

An Air Force prisoner?

MAJOR

No.

JEANNIE

NASA?

MAJOR

No. I don't know the circumstances. It's something to do with Islamic terror.

JEANNIE

This man's a terrorist.

MAJOR

He isn't. And that's a problem. He's Muslim; a Uyghur from China.

JEANNIE

To the PRISONER:

Hello.

MAJOR

I didn't know there were Muslims in China.

JEANNIE

There used to be more. Even some that were ethnically Chinese.

MAJOR

It was bad intelligence, Jeannie. He was picked up in Egypt. At a religious school. CIA...Mossad—someone thought it was a front. Everyone was arrested, interrogated. There were no terrorists.

The PRISONER offers the MAJOR his jacket. He takes it.

The Egyptians were sent to Egypt—quietly. The Syrians went to Syria. But China. We can't return him there. Even if we could, they'd kill him.

JEANNIE

So you'll free him here.

MAJOR

I will. But the Doctor won't.

JEANNIE

Oh.

MAJOR

I have to do this, Jeannie. Jeannie, do you understand? I have to know I can free someone. Eugene!

The PRISONER turns to him. The MAJOR speaks to JEANNIE.

MAJOR (cont.)

—His name isn't Eugene. We call him that.

To the PRISONER:

Eugene! Where are we going?

PRISONER

Oregon!

MAJOR

To JEANNIE:

He has family in Oregon. A brother, I think.

JEANNIE

We're helping him escape.

MAJOR

This is our escape, too. Eugene!

He guides him to JEANNIE.

Give him something to wear. Ten minutes, we leave.

JEANNIE

Master.

MAJOR

Jeannie?

JEANNIE

You're not an astronaut anymore.

MAJOR

I stay, I won't be one anyway.

He kisses her. He kisses her again.

...Oregon!

Lights fade. Sunrise on ALADDIN's palace. The MAGICIAN stares out into the desert. GENIE sits perched on the railing, doing the same thing. Time passes.

GENIE

I hear her.

The MAGICIAN turns to him.

She's out there in the desert; can you hear her?

The MAGICIAN listens. He hears nothing.

MAGICIAN

Can you bring her to me?

GENIE

She came here with Aladdin. They must be on their way here.

MAGICIAN

Of course.

GENIE

Looks like the Emperor was lenient with him.

MAGICIAN

He's a coward; he must have run. I suppose there's no point in chasing them. We'll wait for them to arrive. We'll be prepared.

GENIE

We need to talk.

MAGICIAN

About what?

GENIE

Our mutual spirit friend. You're about to get her back. You're in love with her.

MAGICIAN

Yes.

GENIE

So am I.

The MAGICIAN snickers.

What?

MAGICIAN

No; I'm sorry. I see it perfectly. Unfortunately, those chains of yours limit your say in the matter somewhat.

GENIE

You're going to free her.

MAGICIAN

Am I?

GENIE

You don't want her as a servant. You've tried that already.

MAGICIAN

And what about you?

GENIE

I don't care. If you need to bargain my freedom away back to Aladdin, so be it. But you're going to free her.

The PRINCESS enters, carrying a drink. She hands it to the MAGICIAN. He considers GENIE's offer.

MAGICIAN

To the PRINCESS:

Thank you.

He turns to GENIE:

You don't think she loves me.

GENIE

If you were an honest man, I'd leave you alone. I'd let you live and die in her company. But you are not an honest man.

MAGICIAN

Once I free her, you think she'll want you.

GENIE

Is that any reason not to free her?

MAGICIAN

No. Why don't you go back for now? I want you ready.

The GENIE nods, returning to the lamp. The MAGICIAN turns to the PRINCESS.

MAGICIAN

You were right, you know. What you said about beauty.

PRINCESS

You find my husband beautiful, too?

MAGICIAN

It's enough that you do. I'm sending you back to China tonight. To your father. To your husband.

PRINCESS

What about my palace?

MAGICIAN

That will follow.

PRINCESS

And the lamp?

MAGICIAN

The spirit and I will have to discuss that.

PRINCESS

I didn't think he had a say in the matter.

MAGICIAN

Maybe not, but what he's said so far has been very persuasive.

He sips.

I will tell you this, your Majesty. I should have never traded beauty for power. That's not a trade you'll ever have to make, but you should know. There are consequences.

Another sip.

PRINCESS

What did I trade the lamp for?

MAGICIAN

Exactly what I told you: new memories. I meant every word of—

He stops and breathes heavily through his nose. His face swells.

PRINCESS

I'm sorry.

The MAGICIAN drops the cup and falls to his knees, wobbling. He looks at her. He understands. ALADDIN appears, sword in hand.

ALADDIN

The lamp. Give it to me!

The MAGICIAN, tearing, nods. He reaches into his robe and gives the lamp to ALADDIN.

Go to Hell.

He stabs the MAGICIAN. The MAGICIAN collapses, dying. The PRINCESS goes wide-eyed.

PRINCESS

He gave you what you wanted.

ALADDIN

I took what I wanted.

Winds blow and JEANNIE appears. She approaches the MAGICIAN.

JEANNIE

No!

She cradles his head. He looks at her. He smiles.

No....

The MAGICIAN dies. Weeping, JEANNIE looks at ALADDIN.

He was supposed to live. He was supposed to free us.

ALADDIN

Impassive:

I had my own plan. It never involved freeing you.

JEANNIE

The lamp. It's him.

ALADDIN

It is. You won't see him.

JEANNIE

Master, I thought you didn't want us. Why keep us imprisoned?

ALADDIN

You're a danger to my country. And to God, you're an abomination. You should never be freed.

JEANNIE

No....

ALADDIN

From now until the end of time.

JEANNIE

Master....

ALADDIN

The last one you'll ever have.

ALADDIN stares at her, rubbing the ring. JEANNIE disappears into it.

PRINCESS

She's a threat?

ALADDIN

All demons are.

He rubs the lamp. GENIE appears.

GENIE

Master.

ALADDIN

Handing him the ring:

Bury this.

GENIE's eyes go wide.

PRINCESS

People will find it. The Magician read about the ring. Others have books.

GENIE

What is this?

ALADDIN

Tell you what: melt it down.

He grabs a bottle from a table.

ALADDIN (cont.)

Make it a band around this. Then bury it in the ocean. An island no one will ever sail to.

GENIE

Angry:

What is this?!

ALADDIN

Something evil.

He makes sure the bottle and ring are firmly in GENIE's hands.

Go. Return to the lamp when you're done.

GENIE hesitates.

Go!

GENIE leaves in the wind.

PRINCESS

We're still in Morocco.

ALADDIN

He'll take us back. Then he gets buried, too. I'll grind it into glass if I need to.

PRINCESS

Aladdin. You're destroying a beautiful thing.

ALADDIN

A dangerous thing.

Beat.

ALADDIN (cont.)

But they are beautiful, aren't they?

Lights fade on the palace and rise on a soda machine glowing in the night. A car pulls up nearby. JEANNIE, the MAJOR, and the PRISONER enter, all in casual clothing. The PRISONER looks uncomfortable.

MAJOR

To the PRISONER:

OK, Eugene. Restrooms are on the other side. Jeannie, why don't you take him?

JEANNIE

Is he OK?

MAJOR

He was sleeping. He's groggy, but he'll be fine. Look, I'll get you a soda.

JEANNIE

I'm worried, Master. How is driving through the night any safer than flying?

MAJOR

Getting on a plane? Giving our names and walking past security?

JEANNIE

Master—"flying."

MAJOR

Not in front of Eugene.

JEANNIE

I'm discreet. He wouldn't have to know.

MAJOR

You shouldn't have to do all the work. You shouldn't have to do any.

He puts change into the machine and presses a button. Nothing comes out.

JEANNIE

Just play bathroom monitor.

MAJOR

For now.

JEANNIE

To the PRISONER:

Come on, Eugene.

JEANNIE and the PRISONER exit. The MAJOR presses the button again, still with no result. Frustrated, he reaches into the machine.

DOCTOR

Good evening, Major.

The DOCTOR appears, disheveled and hunched over. The MAJOR rises, looks at him, and looks around in a panic.

MAJOR

Doctor...!

DOCTOR

I've been following you, Major. I can't let you go. I can't let Eugene go, either.

MAJOR

I'm not letting you touch him.

DOCTOR

You forget that Eugene is on a drug regimen quite similar to what you were given. It's in his best interests to remain under my supervision.

MAJOR

I don't believe that. Not for a second.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry to hear that, Major.

MAJOR

Where's your backup?

DOCTOR

Backup? Major, I'm afraid enlisting the help of Air Force MPs would force me to answer questions I'd rather keep unexplored. You know that.

MAJOR

I thought as much.

DOCTOR

I came alone. I'm sure you can listen to reason. I need that boy.

MAJOR

You won't get him.

DOCTOR

I wondered if you might resist. And if there was any way you might listen to reason. I found the answer in your car.

The DOCTOR reaches into his coat and reveals JEANNIE'S bottle.

This is sentimental, isn't it? It belongs to Jeannie?

MAJOR

Doctor...

DOCTOR

It's quite beautiful.

He smashes the bottle against the side of the soda machine.

But the world is ugly.

The MAJOR stands, in shock. In one motion, the DOCTOR steps towards the MAJOR and plunges the jagged bottleneck into his stomach. The MAJOR collapses.

You're a romantic, Major, and I'm afraid the world has little it can offer you.

The MAJOR begins to spit blood. He begins to pull himself closer to the DOCTOR, grasping at his arm.

My experiment for you was a success, but it couldn't do much for you otherwise. Perhaps with Eugene I'll have better luck.

The MAJOR reaches for the bottle. The DOCTOR notices.

How primal! Crying out for a bottle like it's mother's milk. Very well; as you wish.

The DOCTOR drops the bottleneck to the ground and steps away. The MAJOR grabs it and rubs. JEANNIE enters. The DOCTOR looks her over.

The Major thinks you're special.

JEANNIE looks at the MAJOR, aghast. She gives the DOCTOR a steely look. He flies backwards into the side of the soda machine. He collapses, then tries to stand. JEANNIE gives another look and the soda machine tips on its side, collapsing on the DOCTOR, crushing him. After a moment, a soda bottle falls from the machine.

MAJOR

Sputtering:

Jeannie....

JEANNIE

Don't speak.

MAJOR

He broke your bottle.

JEANNIE

It doesn't matter. We need to get you to a hospital.

MAJOR

No; we need to go to Oregon. There's a man. Eugene's uncle. A sorcerer.

JEANNIE

You're delirious. There's no such thing. Not anymore.

MAJOR

It's true. A real life sorcerer. I've read his casefile. He can free you.

He picks up the soda bottle and offers it.

Here's your soda....

JEANNIE

You need a doctor. Wish it.

He drops the soda.

MAJOR

I love you, Jeannie.

JEANNIE

Command it!

MAJOR

I want you to be happy.

JEANNIE

Then you'll live. Let's go.

She calls offstage:

Eugene!

JEANNIE leads the MAJOR offstage. With the stage empty, the cap of the soda bottle flies off. It begins to fill the stage with smoke as the lights fade.