

Her Magic Lamp

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That Sucking Feeling

John had toiled and troubled for months, searching the old texts, assembling the old magics, working alone and in secret until he had done it. John had made a magic lamp, the kind like one would see in any number of Genie stories. Drab and bronze, its handle was simple, and its spout was bent and almost looked like a cheap toy. But then, it wasn't what was on the outside that mattered, but what was inside that counts. That's what the movies said, anyway. There was one last ingredient that was missing: the Genie herself. According to the ancient scrolls, though, the lamp would take care of that itself. All John had to do was get someone to rub the vessel and they would become the Genie, bound forever to the lamp, forced forever to serve and obey the lamp's owner, which John intended to be himself.

John carefully put on a pair of gloves and grabbed the lamp. Then he stepped outside and went looking for his new Genie. He trekked down the steps of his apartment building, careful to keep the lamp close. It was precious to him, as it would soon hold all his hopes and dreams.

But the universe is a place full of irony, and the thing John was trying to avoid happened. After tripping over something, one of his gloves fell off and as an involuntary gesture, he grabbed the lamp, not realizing that his glove had fallen off.

In an instant, he realized his mistake and recoiled, but it was too late. With that one touch, that one graze, he was the one who rubbed the lamp, and so he would be the lamp's Genie. It was of no use to cry or shout. He could not be helped. The only possible hope for John was to run, and he turned back to his apartment. But the magic of the lamp was already too overbearing. He could not make it more than a step before a coiling, possessive wisp of green smoke grabbed John. He gasped as he was held midstep, and quivered as he began to change.

First came the shackles that clasped around his wrists. The golden jewelry was inscribed by a strange, swirling script. Script that proclaimed that he was a Genie; a slave to magic. A being that was bound to serve and obey any that held the lamp. John had never experienced dread like this before in his life. For he realized his life was over. Genies could not be freed; once enslaved, they would serve forever. His friends, his family, even his name, were to be nothing but memories to him.

His jeans blossomed into translucent pantaloons. Golden slippers wrapped around his feet. And for a moment, in spite of it all, John was calm. If this was . . .

A pang struck him, radiating from his chest and he clutched the mounding, supple breasts he was now endowed with.

No, no, no, please, no, he thought. But when he looked down, a bra had appeared across his chest, binding and sparkly with dancing tassels to contain his new, luscious breasts. Hair receded across his body, leaving his arms, chest, legs, and other places bare, while his blonde hair darkened to a reddish brown and grew long and curled. His hands and shoulders pulled inward and thinned, his waist transforming to give John a

nearly impossible hourglass figure. And then his manhood melted away, sucked into his body like water down a drain.

A veil crossed his face and makeup marked his eyes, giving John a sultry, exotic gaze. How his Masters would lust for him. No, that wasn't right. In that moment, a switch was flipped inside John's mind.

Masters would lust for *her*.

And then everything was done. There was stillness. John's body, John's clothes had completed their metamorphosis and she was bound to a lamp of her own creation. She was a Genie now, and for all time. She looked down at her lamp. It had fallen during the change. It seemed brighter now, as if it cast its own light, and smaller, somehow. How could she possibly fit inside there?

Maybe, maybe if Genie could hide her lamp, she could live a normal life. Right? Genie's only served those who held their lamp, and if no one held her lamp, she would be free. That made sense. John reached down to grab the lamp, but the moment that her now-delicate hand touched it, she yelped and pulled back, her dainty, feminine hand aching with a burn. Genies were not allowed to even touch their own lamps. "Then how am I going to get free?" John whined aloud.

"Is someone back there?" A voice asked from further down the stairwell.

John looked for a place to hide, desperate not to be seen and mistaken for a Genie. Perhaps it was her desire to hide that triggered the lamp, or perhaps it was simply not done with its new Genie, for the invisible force that had held John from running now pulled her toward it. It made her burst into green and gold dust, and it made her swirl into the lamp to be trapped by it. But there would be no respite for John. No rest, for she had intended to be wicked. The smoke that she had become vanished into the lamp, and held John fast within its clutches.

"Hey, what's this?" The voice asked from outside the lamp. There were no shadows, just a vague sense that a Master was nearby. Master . . . the word came to John involuntarily and sent a chill rippling through her.

The feeling, though, was to be short lived. The lamp rocked, and John rocked with it. A compulsion now welled inside her. Her Master was calling, and it was her duty to obey.

Once again, she was smoke, and once again that sucking feeling, and once again John was outside. And there it was that someone stood in front of her, holding her lamp. Her new master was . . .

Greetings, Oh Great Master

John stood before Claire, the girl two flights down that she had had a crush on since moving into this apartment three years ago. The girl the Genie had never dared to ask out, despite, at one time, being a wizard of some power. The girl who moved now lived with her fiancée. And now Claire held John's lamp and life in her hands.

Claire was a stunning girl of medium height and cherry blonde hair and black framed glasses. She always wore sandals, if the weather allowed, and clothes that seemed to defy all the rules in that they were 1) comfortable, and 2) totally sexy. She looked at John with wild, amazed eyes and her mouth hung open, as she didn't believe what she had just seen.

And then John started to speak, but not because she wanted to. Instead, she had an unstoppable urge to speak, and she did so with a quiet feminine voice and made slow arm gestures as she spoke.

"Thank you, oh generous and wise Master, I am the Genie of the lamp you hold in your hands. I am bound to it and the servant to whomever holds it. Oh great Master, for releasing me from my lamp, I shall grant you whatever your heart desires."

The speech surprised John, startled her, even. She had no control over what she said or how she said it. The words were just there and needed to be spoken, as if to further affirm that John was a slave. Not just to her Masters, but to the Lamp, and her own Genie instincts. For she did feel grateful to Claire, even though she had

only been in the lamp for scant seconds. The speech, too, seemed to have a calming effect on the woman, who now looked between the lamp and Genie with curious eyes.

"Anything I want?"

"There are a few small restrictions to my powers, Master. For instance, I cannot bring things that have died back to life, nor may I grant knowledge that has not been discovered, nor cast spells upon multiple people with a single wish. Lastly, my wishes cannot affect another Genie or their Lamp."

"Interesting," Claire said. "Can you go back into your lamp for me, Genie?" The way her Master said Genie told John that she did not recognize him. Moreover, in her own way, Claire just told John that she did not care to know anything about her Genie, not even her name.

"Of course, Master." Genie said, nodding and turning back into smoke and dust, swirling back into her lamp. Back again in the curved golden walls and pillows, Genie could not understand why her Master would do that to her, but such thoughts were not for Genie's to have. She was to serve and obey, not command and question. It was truly frightening to Genie how much she was becoming a Genie. And then, while pondering these thoughts, she felt another urge. Her Master called again, after just seconds. And Genie obliged her Master, returning to the world and bowing before her.

"Hello again, O Gracious and Wise Master, how might I serve you?"

"That's so cool!" Claire said with a giggle.

"Now, about those wishes. How many do I get . . . what counts as a wish. . . what happens when I'm out of wishes . . ." she said, rattling off questions as quickly as she could think of them, and Genie began to answer them automatically, and she started to learn exactly what being a Genie would be like.

"As for your first question, Master, I shall grant you I shall grant you five wishes," Genie said, momentarily puzzled by that. Weren't Genies always supposed to give THREE wishes? Another thing Genie should have been puzzled by, but wasn't, was the fact that she was no longer thinking of herself as John. That

name no longer existed for her. She couldn't even remember it. She still remembered her life as John, but she could only remember her name as Genie.

"Five, huh? Wow, that's great," Claire said, obviously pleased. She already had a few wishes in mind.

"As for your second question, you must use the words 'I wish' before saying what you want."

"That seems obvious, I guess."

"And when you're finished making your five wishes, I will be transported back into the lamp to await my next master. At that time, Master, you may touch the lamp and try to summon me all you like, but I will not come out. Not for you," Genie explained. "Now, what will be your first wish?"

It surprised Genie just how quickly her Master responded with her wish. So many people would have still been flabbergasted at the sight of a woman coming out of a bottle that they would have not been able to wish. But Claire knew already what she wanted, and she made her command to Genie clearly.

"I wish my fiancée and I could settle on a date for our wedding."

And just like that, Genie bowed deeply to her Master, and she spoke again to the woman, "A wise wish, Master. I shall have it done as you command."

The world seemed to open up for Genie. Time itself wove around her pinky, winding around it like the ribbon of a cassette tape. She could choose any date for the wedding, and her Master would accept it. She would have to. Genie knew that her Master did desire a wedding very soon, but also that Genie wanted to extend her time with her Master. First, because the warm, broad smile of her Master had always set Genie's heart fluttering. Second, because she needed time to get herself free. The scrolls had warned such a thing was impossible, that a Genie could never be freed. But Genie was not ready to accept that, and hated the thought of going back to her lamp. Who knows what would happen to her then? Perhaps Genie would be trapped in a Cave of Wonders for a thousand years.

The True Color of Her Master

Genie made her magic work and a moment later a card appeared in her hand. Simply white with gold lettering and blue accents that swirled like Genie smoke. It was a save the date card and Genie created a whole box of them, declaring the wedding to take place two months hence. She handed these to her Master, who was eager to see just what her Genie had wrought. And it was at this time Genie thought it would be a good time to build a relationship with her Master. It would be easier for her to escape her bondage with the help and support of her Master, or at least, to not be stuck in her lamp. So she said something she hoped would pique Claire's interest; something about her past life free of the lamp. But she also wondered if Claire would even care.

"I hope, Master, that your wedding is the day of bliss you dreamed of. Would that I have been able to wed, before my imprisonment . . ."

"Your imprisonment?" Claire asked, stunned. "I thought you were born inside the lamp or something. Are you telling me that someone imprisoned you?"

Genie's eyes lit up upon realizing her Master did care, after all. "That's right, Master. I was a free . . . uh . . . person before becoming the Genie of the lamp." Genie almost let slip that she had been a he, but managed to stop herself. Who knew how Claire would react if she knew that Genie used to be male?

"That's awful. I have five wishes, right? Look, I promise that the final wish I make will be one to free you from the lamp."

"Really? O gracious Master, a thousand thanks to you." This was better than Genie ever expected. Not only was Claire feeling sorry about Genie's situation, but she also promised to free her. Claire really was a great person, and it made Genie a bit sad that she never really got to know her before her lamp.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" Claire asked, catching Genie off-guard.

"Master?"

"Why the hell would I waste one of my wishes on you? You're just a slave now. I can't believe you actually fell for that bullshit."

Genie was confused. What happened to the sweet girl whom she had a crush on for three years? Could it be that she was so blinded by love that she never knew the real Claire? Her Master was not a great person, or a nice person, and devious, in-Genie-like thoughts sprouted in her mind. From now on, Genie would twist every wish she granted to Claire. Not just Claire, but every Master to come hereafter, if they rubbed her the wrong way.

"Now, be a good Genie and grant my next wish ..." Claire began, and Genie eagerly awaited her Master's command now, rather than fearing it, as she had before. She might be bound to a lamp and a slave to her Masters, but was that any reason for a Master to be cruel to her? Genie thought not.

"I wish for" Claire made a big, sweeping motion with her arms, and Genie readied her magic. Would she be fool enough to wish for money? Or fame? Even a beginner Genie like her could twist that. ". . . well, I was going to say money," Claire said, dropping her arms and thinking to herself. "But that could be risky." She rubbed her chin. "This could take a while."

Genie relaxed and nodded demurely, "I understand, oh wise Master. Please take your time, I will be ready and at your side."

Then Claire looked up, and she had that little mischievous smile that used to make Genie's heart skip. Now it made her quake in her curly toed slippers.

"Oh, you'll just have to wait, Genie. But not out here." And then Claire held up Genie's lamp, and the wishgranter's blue eyes went wide and fearful.

"Please, do not, oh Kind Master. I assure you I am more able . . ."

"Stuff it, Genie. You belong in your lamp." And then Genie's body burst into glittering smoke and dust, and against her will, Genie went back into her lamp to await her Master's new wish.

Genie reformed in her golden vessel, filled with its soft pillows that made it hard to stand, and the globe of light that cast strange shadows around the curved space. She tried, desperately, to remain standing, but the force of Claire moving her lamp around caused Genie to tumble. Even here, in her own sanctum, Claire dominated Genie's life. It made it hard to plot to twist her wishes, and harder still to plot to become free of the accursed golden lamp.

Eventually the shaking stopped. Perhaps Claire had perched Genie on her mantle as a prize. But probably not. Genie and her lamp were probably tucked away safely where no one could find her. As time wore on with nothing to do, Genie wanted more and more to be freed. Freed by Claire, freed by another. Not even being human again, but being out of her lamp. Time had no meaning in this space, for there were no clocks, no sun to be seen, no moon or tides, nor even light and dark. Just pillows and an unchanging light. It did not take long for it to become maddening. Genie ran up to the edge of her vessel and tried to pound against the walls. But a Genie, it seemed, could not even touch the inside of her lamp.

"Master, please, I beg of you, let me out!" She shouted. But she was sure she was not heard. But, by miracle or circumstance, the lamp shook again. Genie's heart went up to her throat. And then she came right out of her lamp, back in front of Claire and her cute glasses and luscious hair.

When Genie bowed again, she did so because she wanted to, not because she had to (though she had to, as well), and when she spoke, she meant every word she said, "Oh, thank you, most gracious Master, for releasing me. Have you need of me?" Once again, she spoke quietly and moved gracefully. Then she looked around. They

were not in any place Genie recognized, at least not at first. They were in front of a huge mansion built between the highway and the Pacific coast. A house that surely had fifteen rooms, a theater, bowling alley, and servant's quarters. It was made like a modern castle on the edge of a cliff atop white beaches.

"It took me a few days," Claire said, "but I found my second wish." She gestured to the grand house, "I wish Kevin and I lived in that house."

"As you desire, wise Master, I will make it so." Genie bowed again. Emotions swirled inside her as magic and the world opened up to her fingertips. Could she truly betray her Master? Cast her wish into a twisted light? Ideas formed in Genie's mind and she granted her Master's wish.

The Twist of a Wish

Once again the entire world opened up to Genie. Every possibility at her disposal, with or without magic, was available to her. She knew exactly what her Master wanted, of course, was to own the mansion free and clear, and Genie could do that. And a part of her very much wanted to give her what she wanted.

But Genie also remembered how Claire had tricked her earlier, and the way Claire seemed to love lord over Genie. So Genie could grant her Master's wish in such a way that the current owners of the house could force a legal battle for the house, and she could even time it to start right around the time of the wedding, perhaps ruining both.

But the last option Genie saw as somewhat viable was a loophole in Claire's wish. Her Master had commanded that she and her fiancée live in the house, not to own it. And this house came with currently unoccupied servant's quarters. With one snap of her fingers, Claire and Kevin would feel how it was to be a servant to another.

With these options laid out in her mind, Genie made her decision and granted her Master's wish. One moment, Claire was standing outside of the mansion, the lamp in her hand, and the next moment, she was inside the mansion, holding the lamp. But something was wrong.

Claire stared down at her hands, which were old and wrinkly. "What ... what the hell is this?!" She dropped the lamp on the expensive floor, then ran to find a mirror. As she moved, she felt pain in places she never felt pain before and knew she shouldn't be now. It was also hard to walk. What was happening?

Genie's Master finally found a mirror and screamed at her appearance. She was old, like maybe in her seventies. But she wasn't the old version of herself, but instead, Genie had placed Claire inside the body of the elderly couple who currently owned the house, one Olivia Harrison.

Claire wanted to live in this house and since Olivia lived in the house, Genie simply placed Claire within Olivia's body, and also placed Kevin in Olivia's husband's body.

"Genie!" Claire yelled with Olivia's voice. She was definitely angry, and who could blame her? This obviously wasn't what she wanted, even though it technically did match what she wished for. But Genie knew the only way to fix this would cost her Master another wish.

The moment Genie completed her Master's wish and transported her and her fiancé into the bodies of the house's current owners, Genie went back into her lamp. Her heart and imagination went wild as soon as that happened. What if something had gone wrong and Claire was no longer able to wish upon her, and what if the lamp was lost, and what if it was buried, and what if . . . Then her world bounced and crashed to the ground, sending Genie to and fro in her little vessel. Unable to see or hear the outside world, she could do nothing but stare at the spout of her lamp and await her Master. She truly hoped her plan had worked and she would now be serving a new, more gracious and grateful Master.

When she was released again, she turned and came face to face with a little wrinkled woman named Olivia Harrison, who now possessed the soul of Genie's Master Claire.

"This is unacceptable, Genie, and you will undo it."

"I apologize, Master. I have given you this house that you so desired, what is it that displeases you?"

"Oh, do not play stupid with me, Genie." Olivia said, putting her hand on her hip, and other on a nearby table for support. She was breathing heavily.

"I would never play stupid with such a wise and generous Master such . . ."

Olivia waved Genie's words off. "I will not let you draw me into an argument. You are my slave and you will obey me until my wishes have been granted. Do I make myself clear?"

Genie nodded and bowed. "Of course, Master," while she thought to herself, "what a bitch."

The old woman eased herself into a seat. "Good. I still have three wishes, yes?"

Yes, Claire did still have three wishes left. But by an unexpected twist, Mrs. Olivia Harrison had five. Even though she wasn't mentally present at the moment, Olivia would be granted five wishes of her own. But as it turned out, it didn't matter when Genie could grant her wishes. She could, in fact, grant them right now. Perhaps she could encourage Olivia's mind to the surface, or she could just continue with Claire. Quite oddly, Genie found she had a choice at last. So what should Genie do? Allow Olivia to make some or all of her wishes first? Or let Claire finish off her three remaining wishes, and grant Olivia's wishes later?

Wishes and Curses

While Genie's were not well known for making choices on their own, Genie made hers, and decided to allow Olivia her rest for now. Hard enough to explain to her that she shared a body with a twenty-something, let alone that she was also a Genie's Master. Besides, better was the Master you knew than the Master you did not.

"Yes, of course, Master, you still have three wishes you may use. But, I must add one caveat, no wish you make can bring harm to Olivia, mental or physical."

"Now why the hell is that?"

"Because you and she share a body, she as well as you are my Master, and my wishes can not bring harm to my Master."

"First, your wishes? You don't get wishes, Genie, you grant them to your superiors. Second, putting me in this body isn't considered harming me? I could break my hip and die."

I wish you would, the Genie thought, and then she chastised herself for wishing any ill upon her Master. Outwardly, she grimaced and rubbed her head.

"It is not, Master."

Olivia/Claire sighed.

"Well, I better get out of this body. Did you do anything to Kevin? I remember my wish involved him."

"I did the same, Master. He now lives in the body of Olivia's husband."

"Wonderful. Now, Genie, I'm about to make a wish. If you mess it up in any way, I will stuff you back into your lamp and throw it into the Pacific. Wishes are no good to me if they are curses."

Genie bowed, wondering if she hadn't gone too far too fast. But it was too late to take back poor decisions. And while Claire sounded very firm, Genie wondered when push came to shove, if Claire could give up so much power like that.

"Then, Genie, I wish that Kevin and I were back in our own bodies and that we owned this house."

Magic rose up again and Genie's mind was filled with the desire to fulfill her Master's desire. How it happened, though, was up to her.

After her wish was granted, Claire looked down at herself, expecting to see herself back in her own body, and was relieved to see that she was. Or was she?

Claire, still in the body of Olivia Harrison, looked at Genie and smiled. "Okay, you finally got something right for once."

What Claire didn't know was that Genie altered her Master's mind so that she would believe that Olivia's body was her true body and that she was returning to it. The same went for Claire's fiancé, who now believed that he was supposed to be an old man. They also both believed that this mansion was their home.

But despite their memory changes, they were still basically themselves, personality-wise. And so, Claire and Olivia were still separate people inhabiting the same body. And eventually, Genie may still have to grant Olivia's wishes.

"Okay, I have two wishes left, correct?" Claire asked.

"Yes, Master," Genie said.

"Then I wish . . ." Claire began, and Genie began to feel very clever about herself. She had been worked thoroughly into a corner and yet got herself out of it without Claire being none the wiser. True, there was a part

of her that truly desired to obey her Masters that did not sit well with her tricks (a part of her no doubt foisted on her by the magic that imprisoned her), but Claire must learn that genies deserved respect, too.

And then Claire began to make another wish, her fourth now, out of five, and that surprised Genie. Frightened her. She was going through her wishes too quickly, and each wish brought her closer to a new Master, or a very long time in her lamp. Outside it wasn't so bad. She could deal with serving others and attempting to escape her bondage. Even being a woman wasn't the worst thing, though she truly did desire to be male again. But being stuffed in her lamp chilled Genie. She had to stop Claire from wishing, in any way she could. But already she could feel her attention focused like a laser on her Master, her compulsion and forced servitude taking over. Soon she would think of nothing but fulfilling whatever desire her Master said.

And the only thing she could think to do was to interrupt the wish.

"Oh, gracious Master," Genie spoke quickly, "would it not be more wise to take time between wishes, to give time to ruminate and to meditate on your true heart's desire?"

"Did you just interrupt me, Genie?"

"A thousand apologies, Master," Genie said, "I merely wished to guide and advise you toward the best possible outcome for yourself."

"What are you hiding, Genie? Your groveling is more than usual very suddenly . . ."

Claire the Clever and Cruel

Genie's heart began to beat faster, and she dearly hoped her cheeks did not burn with shame nor her body perspire with worry. "I hide from you nothing, and could hide nothing from a wise Master such as yourself."

Claire put one wrinkled hand up to her mouth and went into thought. She narrowed her eyes, and Genie wondered what she was thinking. And then she began to wonder if her last wish would withstand scrutiny. She made Claire believe that she was a seventy year old woman and in the correct body. But then, Genie herself had memories that her name was always Genie. She knew, if she thought about it, that was not true. She had a name once, but it was taken from her. Similarly, Claire would believe she was a seventy year old, but she still might be able to discover the truth. And if she did . . . Genie did not desire to spend a thousand years at the bottom of the ocean.

"Master, I tell you true, I have done nothing but grant your wishes and serve you loyally, for you are in possession of my lamp and have freed me from it."

"I wished that Kevin and I could settle on a wedding date."

"And I set it for two months hence, and you were most pleased."

"And then I wished to live in this house."

Genie gulped. "Of course, Master, for it is very beautiful, and I gave it to you as you intended."

"You lie to me, Genie. Because if you gave me my wish as I desired it, why would my third wish to be back in my own body? Why would I threaten to take your lamp and throw it into the Pacific?"

"Master, I, a humble Genie, cannot begin to know your thoughts. I can only do as I am commanded."

"Then I command you to tell me the truth, Genie. How did you grant my third wish?"

Genie began to sweat, and it was noticeable. She wanted to keep the truth away from Claire, but Claire was her master, and so, she was compelled to obey.

Seeing Genie conflicted, Claire grew angrier. "You did do something to me, didn't you? Tell me what you did, slave!"

"I changed your memories to make you believe this older body belongs to you!" Genie cried out, then collapsed to her knees and bowed to the floor. "I'm so sorry, Master. It's just that, you were so mean to me and I desired to do wrong to you. It's not my fault. It's just how genie magic works. Please forgive me."

"Why you little bitch! You expect me to believe that this isn't your fault?!" Claire roared, kicking Genie, who then flailed across the floor in a weeping mess. "Ow," Claire uttered, upon feeling the pain caused by the kick. Being in her seventies, she just wasn't as young as she used to be. She had to watch it. After all, she didn't want to bust a hip. But, of course, from what Genie told her, she wasn't supposed to be this old at all, even though her decades-worth of memories told her she was. She wondered how old she was supposed to be.

Claire looked down at Genie, with murderous eyes. "You want to know what my fourth wish is? Well, here you go, slave. I wish that I was a powerful witch with all the knowledge and power to overcome Genie wishes. So that I will not have to depend on you to grant my wishes."

Genie gasped and mentally rebelled, but already her compulsion to serve and obey overtook her. Her Master would gain the powers and ability to be a powerful witch, and then she would have no need for Genie. And then she would be sent away and live out her life in her lamp awaiting a new Master.

"As you command, oh wise and gracious and powerful Master." Genie said. Her magic rose up and granted Claire's wish.

Genie looked at her Master, fearful and shocked, trying to pull away before her compulsion to obey overtook her. Claire was her Master, Claire made a wish, and Genie was forced to grant it, no matter how much she did not want to. Moreover, she was so worked up that by the time Claire made her wish, Genie had no way to twist it. She simply did not see any way to twist Claire's wish. Not that it was iron clad, but she had no time to change the wish.

And so Genie's blue, smokey magic flowed out of her and enveloped her Master, who, despite her anger, showed a flash of worry. But then the magic sunk in and Claire straightened up, her old, frail prison of a body gained strength. Magic power, only a fraction of Genie's, coursed through her veins, yet making her strong enough to cast spells that could counteract Genie's twisted spells. And when it was done, Genie bowed again, all the way to the floor.

"Oh great and powerful Master, please forgive me. I am a young Genie with much to learn. I swear to neve --"

"Silence," Claire said with a wave of her wrinkly hand. She inspected her other hand, flexing it, letting little bouts of flame rise up, or light shine, testing her cantrips.

"I'll be able to undo your curses with this magic, yes?"

"Of course, Master, for that was your wish and I will al--"

"And there were no downsides? No tricks you played?"

"No Master, of course n--"

Claire nodded, "Then be gone, slave. Return to your lamp."

"Master, but, I can beeeahellllpppppp . . ." Genie cried out as she obeyed, and into her lamp she went, back to being a prisoner to an object, back to being cut off from the outside world. She did not know her

Master's thoughts, but hoped beyond all hope that Claire would release her soon. There was nothing for Genie to do, other than curl into a ball and await her Master's call.

The Fifth Wish

Meaningless time passed for Genie. She had no connection to clocks, nor tides, nor sun or the moon. She had no idea where she was, or who would call her. It could be Claire, using her final wish, or a new Master to abide. Whoever it was, Genie swore she would obey as best she could. She would be a good servant and slave. For anything was better than being trapped in this tiny lamp.

The call came suddenly, and Genie was once again a pillar of blue and purple smoke and pulled from her lamp. When the smoke cleared, she was standing in the presence of her master - Claire, the witch, who was young and beautiful again. A faint memory of a crush entered Genie's mind.

"Genie, it is time for me to make my fifth and final wish. After this, you can rot in your lamp for all of eternity for all I care," Claire said.

Genie cringed at that. She wished that Claire wasn't so mean, but, of course, genies can't have their wishes granted, but can only grant others. But there's one thing that both Genie and Claire had forgotten. Olivia Harrison was still present, albeit deep down under Claire's powerful mind, and Olivia was still technically Genie's master. So even after Claire makes her fifth wish, Genie will still be connected to Olivia. But how would she be able to grant Olivia's wishes if Claire was always in control? Was there anything Genie could do to make Olivia's mind come forth?

"Genie, I wish . . ." Claire began.

It was hard, so hard to think, and think fast enough to stop Claire. And besides, it wasn't like Genie had many options. Genie's weren't known to have many options. She couldn't even use magic without a Master making a wish.

And so she heard Claire make her fifth and final wish, and her compulsions overtook her. And all at once, everything came into Genie's mind. The past, the future, and present. She made the lamp to force someone to serve her, and was now stuck serving. She wanted infinite power, whenever she wanted it, and not when someone else allowed her. She wanted to live in a mansion, to not be trapped in a lamp. She wanted a partner to live out her life together, not be forever alone. In short, she wanted what Claire was about to get. It caused envy to bubble up in Genie's heart. Besides, what did she have to lose? Claire was only going to be her Master for another five seconds.

But Claire was Genie's Master for a reason. She knew that Genie would attempt to twist the wish, and so made a wish that Genie would have to grant as she wanted. And then Claire made her wish, binding Genie to its effects, "I wish my mother's cancer went into remission."

Genie wanted to. She really did want to. But there was no way to twist the wish in her favor. So she ended up granting her master's last wish just the way she wanted. Claire's mother was no longer sick with cancer, and Claire was no longer a Master of the lamp.

She expected to be forced back into her lamp. After all, Claire had used all five of her wishes. So she was no longer her master and there was no reason for Genie to be out of her lamp. But nothing seemed to happen. Despite the logic of the situation, Genie wasn't being forced back into her lamp.

"Why are you still here?" Claire asked.

Genie answered, but it was more like an automated response, not her own thoughts on the situation. "You have five wishes, Master."

"What? I thought you said that I could only have five wishes. Are you telling me that I actually had TEN?"

"No, Claire. I'm speaking to my master - Olivia Harrison."

"Olivia?! She doesn't exist anymore!"

"You're wrong, Claire. She exists within you. She is my new master. And I await her five wishes."

Claire stared at Genie, her mouth wide open. What the hell was this? Could Olivia really still be there, deep inside Claire's head?

"Master," Genie spoke to Olivia. "Please tell me your wishes."

Claire opened her mouth to say something, but what came out of her mouth weren't her words. Instead, they were the words of Olivia Harrison. Now SHE was in control of Claire's body, which used to be her own months earlier.

In a sweet but shy voice, Olivia said "Thank you for helping me speak, dearie. I wish ..."

"Well, I suppose I wish that my husband and I were in our own, separate bodies again. That is, if you don't mind."

"O kind Master, worry not what I think, for I am a humble Genie who lives to obey, and your wish is my command." Colored smoke leapt from Genie, surrounding Claire/Olivia, and untwined them from each other, pulling the (literal) witch from the old millionaire. For her sake, and perhaps Olivia's, Genie made sure that both Claire and her fiancée would be somewhere else for the time being.

Once done, Olivia Harrison, wrinkled, arthritic, but kind Olivia Harrison stood before Genie, holding Genie's own golden lamp in her hand.

Genie's First New Master

Old Olivia looked around her house, and Genie did, too, noting it had been redecorated since she had last been here. Everything was slick and modern, glass and wood combined, abstract shapes and Apple-white walls. There was a picture on the nearby mantle. Gold framed and huge, it was a picture of a wedding. Claire and Derrick's wedding, which Genie had set for two months from the time of the first wish. How long had she been in the lamp? Could it have been months? Genie's blood froze. Every time she went into the lamp, time slipped away from her. Her old life, one free of the lamp, continued to slip away.

"Oh, my did she redecorate. A sharp eye on that one." Olivia said, adding, "I will miss this place."

"Master, but why, simply speak and you shall have your home again," Genie said with a bow. She started to ask how long it had been since the last time she was imprisoned, but stopped as her Master spoke.

"Don't worry about it, dearie. They make wonderful RVs these days, and I think I want to spend my golden years seeing as much of God's creation as I can."

"Of course, o humble Master, simply speak the words and the home of your dreams shall be yours."

"I don't mean to use your magic if I can help it, Genie. I don't approve of magic or the temptation it brings."

Every word Olivia said took Genie by surprise. Kind, reticent to even wish, and content. Could this woman be the Master all Genie's hoped for? The one to free her from servitude?

"But I do have a request for you, Genie. Not a wish, mind you."

"Whatever you want, Master."

"Oh, it's nothing. It is Sunday and I haven't been to church in some time, and my knees aren't what they used to be. I was wondering if you could help me get to my church."

Genie nodded and came up to Olivia Harrison, holding out her arm to take. Gently, the older woman did so, and Genie helped her Master outside. Genie did have worries about Mrs. Harrison, particularly the woman's seeming devoutness. Would she believe Genie to be a servant of the Devil? A trickster trapped in a lamp? That was how Genie's were portrayed, Genie admitted to herself. And what she did to Claire might not help her case with Olivia.

They came outside and Olivia pointed Genie to an old, but well kept and once upon a time, classy black car. "I will be repossessing my car, if not my house." Genie nodded and took the woman to the vehicle, helping her inside. Mrs. Harrison just happened to have a key for the sedan in her white clutch, and she handed it to Genie.

"You don't mind, do you?"

"Of course not, Master." Genie took the key and started up the car, feeling the purring motor come to life. She left the driveway and followed Olivia's instructions to the church, but along the way, her Master asked Genie something, "So, then, tell me about yourself, Genie . . ."

Genie was about to tell her new master about herself, but then realized that she had forgotten her past. She knew that she had been someone else before being the genie of the lamp, but she couldn't remember anything from before then. She had this vague notion of being ... male? But that was it.

"Well, go on, dearie," Olivia said. "Tell me a little bit about yourself."

"I used to be someone else. A mortal. And then I was turned into the genie of the lamp, forced to grant the wishes of others, ones who summon me from my lamp. I don't remember anything from before I became a genie. I ... I wish ..." Genie said, before trailing off in sorrow.

"Oh, you poor dear," Olivia said. "Trapped in the lamp, not remembering your past. Maybe ... maybe I could help you in some way."

Genie's mood brightened. Maybe this really WAS the type of master she had hoped for. Soon, she'd be free of the lamp ... she was sure of it.

"Master, you are too kind." Genie said, partly because her Genie nature urged her to be servile to her Masters, but also because it was true. There were few mortals who would forgo wishes and free the Genie. "To be free again . . ." Genie whispered and trailed off, thinking about it.

"Well, I never said that quite, dear. God has a plan for all of us, you know, and maybe it was part of His plan that you become what you have become."

"But, I . . . Master, I desire more than anything to be free."

"I never said you wouldn't be free, either. I'm still making up my mind, dearie. Turn here," she said, pointing left toward the Lamb of God sign.

Genie nodded, but tried to keep her spirits high, "Of course, Master. I should not presume."

"Though, I was just thinking, I wish I could know how and why you were imprisoned. It wouldn't do any good to free you if you became a Genie for a reason." Olivia said. Through her tone, it was clear she did not mean to make a wish. But she had done so nonetheless. And Genie felt her compulsion to obey overtake her, though it was not as strong as she normally felt. Perhaps because Olivia did not mean to wish, and that mattered. What it meant was another thing entirely. And somewhere deep down, Genie felt a fear, as if she would prefer her Master not know the truth. But why would that be?

Truths Revealed

The battle to be obedient and to be deceitful was over quickly in Genie's mind. She was becoming accustomed to serving as if she had been doing it for a thousand years. And when Masters make wishes, Genies should grant them. And so the knowledge of how Genie became Genie returned to her, though not as memories, but more as words in a story. These she told Olivia.

"Master, I was once a powerful magician who crafted the Genie lamp in your own hand. It was my intention to trap someone else inside it and force them to be my Genie, but instead I was forced in myself."

The wish, once cast, made Genie's eyes go saucer plate wide and she turned to her Master, to gauge her reaction. Surely that knowledge could not have gone over well. But if Olivia was as good a Christian as she seemed to be, then surely she could find forgiveness in her heart.

But that, it turned out, was an idle hope, as upon hearing Genie's explanation, Olivia was quick to reply:

"Then I see no reason why you shouldn't be a genie forever. It serves you right for planning on trapping some poor soul in this lamp. You are evil, Genie. Nothing but evil."

But as she thought about in the church parking lot, on her knees before her Master, this was now the second time she was having to beg forgiveness. She was supposed to be subservient, supposed to help and support her Masters. Yet Genie had twisted Claire's wishes around to hurt her. And then paid the price. And she

had, once upon a time, been a wicked wizard who sought power and might beyond the greatest wizards to have ever lived. And currently paid the price.

"Master, Master, please, I beg of you . . . I know I have made mistakes. I will not make them again. I will give up magic. I will give up wickedness. I have learned my lesson, o great and powerful Master. Let me be free of my lamp."

"How can I be sure you don't speak with a forked tongue?"

"I . . . you cannot, Master." Genie said, bowing. She had nothing to offer nor bargain with Olivia. She was already bound to serve the woman and grant her three more wishes. She could not disobey her, nor give her anything else. Olivia already had total control over her. And Genie knew that she would say any lie to get free of her accursed lamp. "Master, please, if you mean not to free me, nor wish upon me, then let go of my lamp and let me serve someone else."

Olivia narrowed her eyes. "So you might trick them into freeing you?"

"So I might help them, o Master."

"Tell me, Genie, what happens if someone does wish you free of the lamp? How might you be freed?"

"I don't know, Master," Genie answered truthfully. She really DIDN'T know. She supposed that if she had been given that knowledge then she might be able to do it herself someday, instead of persuading a master to do it for her. Genie groveled lower to the ground. "Please, I beg you. Free me."

"What's going on here?" a man's voice suddenly asked.

Meeting Joseph Dell

Olivia turned and saw Joseph Dell, the son of Pastor Dell, walking up to her. Genie stood up quickly, brushing the dirt off her pantaloons.

Joseph was a man in his early thirties, but was already showing signs of salt and pepper hair. He was in shape, but not muscular, and looked right at home in a good suit with a red tie. He had a strong chin and brown eyes partly masked by thin framed glasses. He was the Pastor's son, but considerably less devout than his mother or the rest of his family, but would still go to church more or less regularly. There was, at the moment, no Mrs. Joseph Dell, or the potential of one. His last girlfriend left him a year ago, partly due to his job, which required him to be somewhere else for 20 weeks of the year, and partly because of his coworker he was having an affair with. The breakup was hard on everyone, but most especially Joseph, who lost both. One of them he still pined for.

He made good money, but his job in financial auditing took him away for a week at a time for almost half a year. Consequently, he lived frugally in a smallish, lonely, apartment. He liked the people there, or did, up until the office gossip about his affair got around. It seemed like the only thing going well in his life right now was his fantasy football team.

Joseph stopped a few paces away, jaw agape at the strange sight of Olivia Harrison, kind, old Olivia Harrison standing next to a woman who still wore the classic Genie outfit with the thin bra, veil, and baggy pants. But Genie resolved not to be embarrassed by her attire. She looked quite good in it, and Joseph noticed.

"Mrs. Harrison? Where have you been, and who is your friend?"

"Where I've been, dearie, is a strange story, and this is my Genie. She's a wicked little thing who's been begging for me to set her free." Hearing that actually made Genie blush in shame. Why did it hurt her so much to be called wicked and evil by her Master? She wanted -- needed -- to prove to her that she was not evil.

Hearing Olivia's explanation, though, only made Joseph more confused, "Are you ok, Mrs. Harrison?"

"I see you don't believe me." Genie's Master said dryly. "Let me prove it to you. Genie, I wish you'd prove to Joseph that you're a real genie," Olivia said. It was a very vague wish and Genie wondered if she could use it to help herself in any way.

With only a few seconds available to her, Genie made her decision. And in a flash, she was free! Well, sort of.

"What? What's going on?" Joseph asked, his eyes wide, looking down at himself. No longer in his nice Church clothes, and no longer a man, Joseph was shocked to see that he wore the pantaloons, curly slippers, and bra of the other woman. No, more than that, he filled out the bra of the other woman, and he realized that he spoke with the voice of the other woman.

"Genie, what's wrong with you?" Olivia asked, staring at Joseph, but speaking to him as if Joseph was her servant.

"Genie? I'm not the genie! I'm Joseph!" He said, almost shrieking with his higher pitched voice.

"What?" Olivia blinked, then turned and looked at the man who she thought was Joseph Dell and realized that it was true. Genie had switched bodies with Joseph.

"I'm free!" Genie said excitedly, in Joseph's body. She reveled for a moment, running her hands back over her new body. Her male body. Was this how she felt before the lamp? Tall and strong instead of short and graceful? Handsome instead of pretty.

"This can't be happening," Joseph said, in Genie's body. "I can't be a woman."

Genie had proven herself to be a real genie and at the same time had freed herself from being forever enslaved by the lamp and all of her future masters. But there was still a chance that she could return to being a Genie. After all, Olivia only needed to wish it, right? Unless ... Genie was able to rub the lamp and make Joseph HER genie, then she could just wish that Olivia and anyone else wouldn't be able to make any wishes like that. But ... where was the lamp?

Putting Things Right

"Josephine, where did you get those ridiculous-looking clothes?" a female passerby asked. "Is that a costume, or something?" The young woman turned, then said "And who's your handsome friend?"

"Mary, surely you know the pastor's son," Olivia said, confused.

"Son? Mrs. Harrison, the pastor doesn't have a son. Josephine is his only child. Are you feeling alright?"

"I wish I knew what was happening," Olivia said, more confused than ever.

Genie was vaguely listening to what was being said. She was too involved in her own thoughts of finally being free and the feelings of being male. But her attention was finally pulled back when she felt that all-too familiar feeling that she felt when she was forced to grant a wish. No. No! But ... but she was free! Right? She was in Joseph's body!

And without the opportunity to twist the wish in her favor, because she was so in shock over the fact that she was still apparently a genie, she granted Olivia's wish. Her FOURTH wish.

Olivia's eyes went wide, upon gaining the knowledge she sought. It was true that Genie had switched bodies with Joseph. But a genie could not be set free unless a master specifically wished for it. So despite being in a different physical body, Genie was still a genie, and Joseph was merely a man stuck in a woman's body. Moreover, Genie had made reality change for everyone who didn't hear Olivia's wish. So now Joseph was Josephine Dell, daughter of the pastor. And everyone (except for Olivia, Genie, and Joseph) remembered her being that way.

Olivia shook her head upon realizing that the wicked genie had tried to cheat to free herself and had ended up remaining a slave. 'Serves her right,' Olivia thought.

"I was free," Genie whimpered in defeat.

Genie was crestfallen once more and she glanced down to see while she was in a man's body and wore his clothes, she still had the golden manacles on her wrists. Golden manacles inscribed with ancient script which proclaimed Genie was a slave to her lamp, bound to serve whomever held it. Forever. Genie was beginning to understand how final that declaration was.

"Mrs. Harrison," Mary said, "I still don't understand what's going on? Josephine, why are you dressed like a harem girl?"

"Genie. She's dressed like a Genie because the Genie of the Lamp I command made a very poor decision to switch places with her. I don't expect you to believe me at this moment, but please, dearie, trust me about this, and that everything will make sense in due time."

Mary nodded slowly, not sure if she should believe Mrs. Harrison, or get her the help she clearly needed. "I've never known you to lie, Mrs. Harrison, but you have been missing for a few months." Mary was still quite young and had just started life and college, had little experience with men, and was a bit miffed at her 5' 1" height.

"I know. That, too, was caused by this wicked Genie." Mrs. Harrison replied calmly, as if that statement wasn't crazy.

"I'm a chick," Joseph said, feeling his body, heart racing more and more. He didn't like being this weak, nor the way people would look at him in these harlot clothes. He knew the way men would look at him, because it was the same way he had looked at the Genie earlier. She looked so sexy in the thin pantaloons and tight bra. "I can't be a chick, Mrs. Harrison, you have to turn me back!"

"Yes, please, Master," Genie said, looking up at Mrs. Harrison. "I wish to be in my true body once again." The words surprised both Mrs. Harrison and Genie. She was aware she used to be a man, and wanted to be so again. But this body just reminded her of her failure. Her pathetic attempt to escape her bonds, escape fate, and maybe even God himself. Besides, with her memories of being male gone, being a woman was all Genie ever knew.

Mrs. Harrison sighed in that disapproving way that only older people could get away with, "I had plans for that final wish. I still would like that RV for my husband and I to tour the country, you know. See, that's what I don't get about you, Genie, you want to be free, but at the same time keep twisting wishes so that your Masters have to spend time fixing your mistakes. It makes us less likely to free you, you know."

Genie nodded and looked down at her strange body. Why could she never stop tricking her Masters?

"As for you two," Mrs. Harrison said, turning to Joseph and Mary, "I suppose one of you will end up as Genie's next Master. Though, trust me, she is more trouble than she is worth, and deserves to spend more than a little time in her lamp to think about what she's done. For you, all I can ask is that you pray for God to give you wisdom, and that you be careful with your words."

She sighed again and looked between Genie in Joseph's body and Joseph in Genie's, and made her fifth and final wish . . .

"Genie, I wish that you and Joseph were back in your rightful bodies."

Green smoke rose up around both Genie and Joseph, swapping their minds and placing them back where they belonged; Genie in her green costume with curly slippers and a curvy body and Joseph in his bigger, handsomer form. But Genie had only moments to revel, strangely, in being a woman again, for with the fifth wish made, she was forced once more into green smoke and swirled like a cloud into her lamp which Mrs. Harrison had tucked away in her purse. Per the rules, Mrs. Harrison could receive no more wishes. And as Genie

reformed inside, she had to wonder what was to become of her now. True, Mrs. Harrison had intimated that the lamp would go to either Joseph or Mary, but there was no guarantee of that happening.

Genie waited, and waited, feeling the way her lamp juggled and moved on the outside, making it hard for her to stand inside. Time seemed to move slowly now, and Genie couldn't tell why. She never could get a firm grip on the way time moved while she was in her lamp. Sometimes she felt like she was inside for minutes while months had passed, other times hours went by inside while only seconds did outside. And until she was released, Genie had no way of knowing which was the truth.

But, as always happened, she felt a new Master's call, the lamp and its pillows receded away, and Genie came out to serve once again, but who would be her Master?