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The Bottle

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Tatiana sat at her kitchen table marveling at the remarkable week she had. First, she found a thousand dollars sitting on the curb, she met a handsome man her age, a job promotion at work and now she just got a vacation to Cuba handed to her because her sister found out she was pregnant and didn't want to travel anywhere.

"Maybe I should buy a lotto ticket?" she grinned across the room and thought about it. Nodding she decided she would do that on the way to work tomorrow. Sipping her coffee, her eyes fell upon the strange bottle she had picked up at a garage sale last weekend.

Picking it up in her hand, it felt like it was vibrating softly. Obviously, it was just her imagination. The bottle had a slender neck and a fat bottom. It was a smoky dusty rose with foreign letters engraved in the glass. The bottle was empty she had already checked when she was at the garage sale. It just felt foreign yet familiar. Like it belonged to her. The notion was ludicrous, yet she couldn't shake the feeling every time she picked it up that it was home. It had found its way back to her. Yet she never laid eyes on it before.

When she had asked the owner of the garage sale, he didn't know it was found in one of the several boxes that his grandfather had left him. He was just trying to liquidate as much of the useless things he had inherited to pay off the funeral and bills.

With that she took the pretty bottle that looked like it had flowers and a strange language etched into the smooth glass as well as a book of poetry. She had gotten to that point in her life that she had a little money and indulged in picking up little trinkets that she found interesting to add to her décor.

This little gem was like a good luck charm. Maybe she was reading too much into it? She did work her butt off at work and deserved that promotion. As for the handsome man her age she was sure there was more than meets the eye. Maybe he had a wife and girlfriend on the side? She chuckled.

“Okay stop raining on your own parade.” She got up and took her coffee cup to the sink rinsing it out. She checked the fridge and frowned. Meager pickings. It was going on seven, she had time to run out and pick up a couple things at the store down the road. Grabbing her purse and a couple of reusable shopping bags, she slipped on her shoes and went out the door.

The grocery store was quiet tonight as she walked around with her empty shopping cart. What did she want to eat tonight? Maybe she should just order a pizza? Or Chinese food? She ended up picking up some ready-made chicken, salad things and milk. As she was checking out, she decided to buy a lotto ticket for tonight’s draw. The lady behind the counter was pleasant and friendly.

“Miss be careful, it looks like that guy in the blue jeans and sweater was following you around the store.”

“Where?” she looked around and didn’t see anyone.

“I’m not sure I think he may have left.”

“Oh, how weird.”

“Oh, we get weird here daily.” The clerk laughed. “Just be careful walking home.”

“Thanks,” she bagged up her goodies. Taking the lotto ticket, she shoved it deep into her pocket.

As she walked home, she kept an eye open for anyone who might be following her. It was weird earlier today at work she had a feeling that she was being watched but there was no one

around. Maybe she was just losing it? The store clerk pointed out that she was being followed inside the store. She hadn't noticed it then. Was she really losing it? Or was there something to be concerned about? Tatiana stopped and turned slowly around, scanning every corner of the street and the windows of the buildings, no one was watching her. Trying to shake off the feeling of being paranoid she picked up her speed and headed back home. Once inside she locked the door then took a quick sweep of her home, she was home alone, no one was there, no one was watching her. Putting on some music she began to make herself a late dinner and poured herself a glass of wine to go with her chicken salad. Sitting down at the kitchen table her mysterious bottle felt like company. Taking her time, she chewed her food and thought about her day. She felt lucky and in an upbeat mood.

She sat staring at the bottle for some time. It was calling out to her. There was something about it. Tatiana couldn't put her finger on it but there was something unusual about the bottle. Getting up she washed her dishes then got her laptop out.

First, she typed in 'Mysterious frosted glass bottles', after spending ten minutes scrolling through page after page she didn't see anything resembling her bottle. She cleared the search. 'Mysterious old frost pink bottles', this time she took much longer searching through the pages. She changed the search again to "Antique frosted pink bottles' and before she knew it, it was going on midnight, and she had wasted her evening away searching for weird shit on the internet.

Calling it a night she packed up her laptop, made her rounds to check all the windows and doors. Everything was secured, turning out the lights she headed off to her bedroom where she slipped into her nightgown, brushing her teeth and then crawled in between her cold satin sheets. Closing her eyes, she was out like a light.

She stood in woods; the moon was shining brightly through the trees. Tatiana had no idea where she was at first but then recognized the lake beyond the trees. When she was a teenager, she would come up to the mountains with her grandparents in the summer. There was a cool breeze that rustled through the leaves. There was someone in the woods with her.

“Hello?” she called out.

No reply.

“I know you’re there, hello?” she tried again.

Frowning she was greeted with silence. Tatiana began walking towards the water. She felt the little hairs on the back of her neck detecting someone else nearby. Standing on the sandy cold beach, the grains of sands sunk between her toes, she waited. There was someone behind her. She could feel their eyes burning through her. Turning around she found a pair of yellow eyes floating a few feet from her. They blinked.

“Who are you?” she ventured.

“You can see me?” came a whisper that mingled with the wind.

She nodded, “yes.”

“How strange. Tatiana you are a strange woman. Who are you really?”

She didn’t know how to answer.

“Are you an empath?”

“No.”

“A witch or shaman?”

“No.”

“How strange.”

“How so?”

“Normally humans cannot see me, the last couple of days, I felt you watching me.”

“Me? Watching you?” she laughed. “I think it’s the other way around. What do you want from me?”

“That is my question to you.”

“I don’t want anything.”

“Impossible. You’re human right?”

“I am.”

“Humans always want something.”

“I don’t. I don’t even know you.”

“But you see me?”

“Yes,” she nodded to the floating eyes. “I see your eyes.”

“What about the rest of me?”

“Nope just your eyes.”

“Just my eyes?” the voice was befuddled.

“Yes, just your eyes. The eyes are the window to a person’s soul.”

The voice laughed a rich deep laugh that scared the birds as they flew away, out of the trees and into the dark night skies. She smiled at least she was amusing, she thought.

“How strange, Tatiana you are a mystery to me.”

She smiled, “my last boyfriend said the same thing.”

“I return to my question, what do you want from me?”

“Nothing, I don’t even know you.”

“Rubbish. Speak honestly human I command it.”

“Okay, now you’re just being rude.” She turned away from the floating eyes and returned her attention to the placid lake in front of her. The moon shone on it brightly. It was so peaceful out here.

“Tatiana?”

“Yes?”

“Please let’s just get on with this. What is it you want from me?”

“What is your name?”

“I have none.”

“What do people call you?”

“Jinn.”

“Okay Jinn, I’ll tell you again I don’t want anything from you.”

“I’m a Jinn.”

“What’s a Jinn?”

“A genie?”

She laughed.

“It’s not funny.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Are you a genie that is going to grant me wishes?”

“Yes, I thought that was clear.”

“No, no it wasn’t. “Okay, what is it that you wish for?”

“Are you a prisoner? Wait! Do you belong to my bottle?”

“Yes, and yes.”

“Oh, and you’re a genie? Are you for real?”

“What kind of question is that?”

“Do you live in my bottle?”

“Yes.”

“And you’re going to grant me wishes?”

“Yes.”

“Is there a catch to it?”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Are you the reason I am having amazing luck this week?”

“No, you haven’t wished for anything.”

“I don’t need anything.”

“Tatiana, I don’t think you understand.”

“Jinn, I’m good. Really. Thank you for being here. How long have you lived in the bottle?”

“Many centuries.”

“Are you a prisoner to the bottle?”

“Yes.”

“I wish you to be free.”

“Wait? What? That is not how it works Tatiana.’

“Why not?”

“That’s just not how it works.”

“Well, that is my wish. You figure it out.”

Tatiana woke up with the sun shining in and birds singing outside her window. Getting up she went to the kitchen and started some coffee.

“Good morning, jinn did you figure it out yet?” she asked the bottle on the kitchen table.

“Tatiana just make another wish?”

“I told you what I wished for.”

“I don’t think you understand the gravity of your wish.”

“Don’t you want to be free?”

“Yes, but.”

“No but, that was my wish. I wish for you to be free.”

A soft pink smoke rose from the bottle and touched the ceiling. It shimmered and floated down to the floor in front of her. A seven-foot bald dark skin man stood before her. Stretched and looked down at her.

“Thank you little one. I am forever in your debt.”

“No Jinn it’s fine. Do I get to keep the bottle?”

“You can have it.” His large yellow eyes seemed to twinkle. “Are you sure you can’t think of anything to wish for?”

“Told you already Jinn I’m good.”

He leaned down and kissed the top of her head. “Call me if you change your mind.”

“What like?” she raised an eyebrow. “Jinn!” she called.

“Yes, little one like that.” He chuckled.

“And you will hear me?”

“Yes, I will. Okay off to go right some wrongs and see the world.”

“Have fun!” He turned back into smoke and floated up through the ceiling. Tatiana sat at her kitchen table for a few minutes holding the empty bottle in her hands, wondering if that was all just a dream. How strange. The bottle felt different, it wasn’t vibrating, it felt empty.