

Kiss Your Mama

The bottom of a brown bottle stuck out of the dirt. I had stubbed my toe against it and was dancing around, hopping on one foot, cursing at the sky. Not something I would do if my mama was close. Still, I peered over my shoulder to make sure she wasn't near.

Once I got done hopping, I plopped on the ground—vigorously rubbing my toe.

“Damn bottle.” I grab a rock to smash it, but the bottle rings like metal and the rock bounces off leaving my hand numb with the shock of it.

“What the hell?”

I get so close I could lick the bottle. I pick up a new rock, with a sharp edge—curious—and dig.

Every time I scrape against the bottle, it rings like a bell. I try to be gentler. After several minutes, I'm able to scratch enough dirt and rocks from it, that I pull it free.

Wiping the dirt from the rest of the brown bottle, I see a name on the side. I don't know it. “Schlitz, what's that? Sounds like shits.”

“Yes, Master.”

I jump back, dropping the bottle—falling on my ass.

“You called my name. What do you wish?”

“Wish?” I crawl back to the bottle. “I don't have any wishes. Who are you?”

“I'm a Djinn. My home is in the first brown beer bottle. It's a cursed object.” His voice reminds me of that salesman last Spring who buffaloed people to buy the paint that flaked off in the first heatwave.

“Djinn? What's that? I've never heard of one?”

“I offer wishes. Three, to a wise man.”

I pick up the bottle. I shake it upside down, trying to force the voice out. Only dust, dirt, and a dead beetle come out.

“I don't want three wishes. I read Ali Baba. My mama would crack my skull if she knew I was talking to a damn Genii.”

“Nonetheless, you have three wishes. Command me, or you'll be cursed.”

I ain't going to be cursed. I have enough to deal with in my life with my mama. Thinking doesn't take long. "I wish my mama was deaf."

"Granted."

No flash of light or a thunderclap. Instant cold sweat on the bottle and then the dew on the glass is gone. I tuck the bottle into my waistband and head home.

When I get home, neighbors surround my clapboard home. I push through them. Mama's head is in her hands and she's bawling. People comfort her, but she's miming she can't hear them. I smile and start cursing. People start boxing my ears, but my mama can't hear. I laugh while she cries.

Hours later, the fun wore off though when everyone left and I'm just sitting alone in the dark, saying the odd curse word. It's like throwing a rock at dead dog expecting to get a reaction. Nothing.

"Genii. This ain't fun. Give my mama back her hearing."

"Granted. Wishes are curses..."

The Genii sweats.

"Shut up."

"Don't tell me to shut up. I can hear again. I ought to box your ears. What is wrong with you talking like that?" My mama reaches out and begins to clout me, and I duck, running from her. I'm grinning though.

"Mama, you can hear again."

"Of course I can hear again. It was just a spell that comes over a woman sometimes. It weren't meant to last. Now go clean up. You look dirtier than a muddy pig rolling around in his Sunday best."

I walk to the rain barrel outside and begin to wash up. The bottle in my waist band won't stop jostling around.

"Quit it."

"One more wish. Then you can set me free."

"Fine. You're smart? Been around long?"

"Thousands of years."

"Learned lots of languages?"

“Tens of thousands of languages.”

“Know the curse words in all those languages?”

“I can grant you knowledge...”

“I need a teacher. I wish for you to teach me a new curse word every day in a new language I can say in front of my mama.”

“What the fuck? You want me to teach you a new curse word every day until you die?”

“Say granted.”

“Damn you.” I feel the Schlitz’s surface drip amber liquid. “Granted.”

“What’s today’s word?”

“Merde.”

I place the brown beer bottle on the windowsill with a new flower for mama and I give my mama a kiss—with this mouth—and use my new word, grinning the whole time.