

Dream Jeannie... um, which is to say Kelly Is My Dream Girl, always has been, always will be.

by  
Eddie Takosori

*Dream Jeannie*

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*And that's where the rest of Eddie Takosori's works may be found*

*It's fiction, yada-yada, any resemblance is coincidental*

Eddie was one of those delightfully naïve--or if you prefer blissfully unaware--souls who believed in whatever nonsense they might happen to hear regardless of the source. As such, he believed in ghosts, magic, fairies, gremlins, and witchcraft, but those being fairly common delusions, they were just the tip of the iceberg. He also believed in UFOs, which he liked to call the alien love menace, and if you're going to live your life believing that aliens already live amongst us, then it only makes sense to put a certain amount of faith in the CIDC as well--the CIDC being a top secret government agency dedicated to defending the Earth against the aforementioned alien invaders. For true believers, the fact that you've never heard of this agency will only serve as further proof that the agency is indeed top secret. I suppose I could leave it at that, but somewhere it should be mentioned that Eddie also believes in the Hollow Earth, the Flat Earth, the Concentric Earth, and even the Lost Earth, all pretty much at the same time, without

any regard for the obvious incompatibility issues between the different theories. You know, the type of incompatibility issues which a more logical or scientifically oriented mind might surmise immediately from the names alone, if nothing else.

For the most part, all of this is neither here nor there. Rest assured that conversations with Eddie could be trying at times, but they were sure to be lively, interesting, and take unexpected turns, but perhaps more importantly--yes far more importantly--was that all of these ideas made wonderful grist for the mill in his chosen profession as a genre writer of Fantasy and Science Fiction--albeit not a terribly successful or well known one, but being the delusion sort, Eddie was certain this was but a temporary phenomena and fame was just around the corner. When you get right down to it, self delusion is a fairly useful skill to have at your disposal when you sit down at your typewriter, clear all the rejection letters off of your desk, and prepare to write. So really--all in all--rather than being a liability, one could say that as a package these divergent beliefs were a necessary job skill in pursuing his chosen career--or more properly hobby--and they did turn out to be rather helpful at parties as well. I'm sure that it will be relatively easy for you to picture some sort of serious scientist type fellow boring the holy begeesus out of a cute young coed, and then imagine Eddie waltzing up and rescuing the fair maiden by mentioning how men never walked on the moon or that Jurassic Park was actually based on the ill fated research expedition that Dr. Fritz Heinmillerstien's led into the wilds of Madagascar in the late '70s. Of course, these topics are rather pedestrian and too well known to be genuinely interesting, so I only mention them so that you may get a feel for what a conversation with Eddie might be like. The salient point is that Eddie tends to wander far afield rather quickly... perhaps as we--or at least I--have done here.

All of this color text and word padding aside, the most relevant aspect of Eddie's character was that he believed in magic--most ardently, completely, and unquestioningly. He always had, and he probably always would. This wasn't something that just

started yesterday after all. These sorts of views--and the intricate base of obscure and arcane knowledge that they were founded upon--were not developed and/or learned overnight. As such, if you were to meet Eddie at a convention, say as he was walking towards the podium to accept--yet another--award for taking the F/SF genre to heretofore unknown levels of realism, and asked him about his childhood, he might tell you a story about how way back when he had sent away for the Secrets to the Universe (as advertised in the back of the type of magazines he preferred), and how for a mere \$4.99 (+shipping, and 4% tax for CA, VA, and MI residents) the mysteries of... well, the universe and everything else had been revealed to him, or at least set down in print. Or, when he finally made it to the podium, he might give a great speech recalling the countless... er, um, experiments that he had undertaken as a child in a valiant effort to broaden his understanding, wisdom, and insight into the world around him. For those not in the know, we shall merely point out that the young scientist-to-be's experiments are oftentimes indistinguishable from a young clairvoyant-to-be's magical spells, and that the young Eddie Takosori was known to say a word of power or two into the wind, as he mixed a magical potion over the kitchen sink, (out of common, everyday, household ingredients); or that once or twice he may have meditated on the wonders of it all in a carefully outlined chalk circle whilst holding a beeswax candle in either hand. But then you might have already known all of this had you yourself back in the day had the foresight to spend a mere \$4.99 (+shipping and handling, due to the secretive nature of the materials, once opened no returns will be accepted). Yes, Eddie's childhood was something special, and he often looks back with nostalgia on those where simpler days when the world was young and new and anything was possible.

Now the odd part in all of this is that no matter the disappointment, no matter the lack of success, no matter the fact that the potions prepared over the kitchen sink only served to enrage his mother, Eddie's belief in the arcane never waned.

OK. I mean, it waned a little here and there, but in the end, they were only short term set backs, nothing that could not be easily dismissed after a few hours or days of careful reasoning. After all, with all that chanting, summoning lines of power about him, and altering the basic vibrational resonance of the greater world at large, Eddie was just darn lucky he hadn't alerted some nefarious spirit eating demon to his emerging presence. I mean, if you were going to throw your heart, body, mind, and soul into a project, one might expect some... er, um, nasty repercussions as some evil creature tried to obtain a young sorcerer's soul on the cheap, but that's what the protective circle outlined in chalk was all about. And if you needed more proof than that to assure yourself you were onto something big, you weren't Eddie Takosori. I mean, thank Gra'gl he'd gotten that part right. With all of those fizzled spells, and spoiled potions, I shudder to think what would have happened to young Eddie if he hadn't at least mastered the all important circle of protection first!

With logic like that, you can see how easy it was for to let doubt and negativity slip from his mind, and then he would be off to another garage sale in search of magical grimoires, used crystal balls for sale on the cheap, and old lamps that looked like they might contain a Djini or two.

I still remember--or rather that is to say--Eddie still remembers the first time he bought a magical lamp. True--I mean, fair enough--it wasn't actually a lamp, but if you were a Jeannie, it was exactly the type of vessel you'd like to live in. Eddie still has that particular bottle by the way. He can see it from here--as he writes. It sits on a shelf in his study, next to dozens more like it, but then, I'm getting ahead of myself.

That first bottle... Eddie didn't know what he was looking for. He was just looking through some neighbor's junk. She seemed like she might be a witch. She certainly was old, female, hard to understand and from the old country, so she had all the traditional traits, and for whatever reason she and Eddie had never

gotten really along, never seen eye to eye as it were on where exactly it was permissible to play ball, collect mushrooms, or even walk. She had some misguided notion about her property not being a public right of way, or a “thoroughfare” as she liked to call it. “This is not a thoroughfare!” she would call out the window, and Eddie would just sort of wave as he cut through her yard in the freshly fallen snow on his way to school, because even if he had known what thoroughfare meant, he wasn’t about to walk an extra 20’ on some dry, well plowed road in that sort of weather. It wasn’t so much that he was lazy, as it was the general principle of the thing. If he stopped cutting across her lawn, she would have won, and basically Eddie had enough losses going in his life without conceding this game to crazy old lady who never bothered to get out of her house.

The point is, over the years they had come to a mutual feeling of... Well, she had stopped yelling long ago. The boy clearly wasn’t going to listen. And he had long since stopped waiving. The lady was clearly insane, better to run through her yard as quickly as possible. That’s obviously what she desired, so who was Eddie to thwart her wishes. Or at least, that’s one explanation, and perhaps not a very convincing one, so another would be that the old hag of a witch--and I use the label with reverence and civility--was frightened of Eddie, of his youth, his vitality, but more importantly of the growing aura of power, might, and/or delusion, which he carried with him like a suit of armor. No doubt his power frightened her... which was understandable as being a witch she would know about the bolt of lightning Eddie held at the ready in his fingertips, and she shrank from the awesome, incomprehensible (but oddly reducible into pamphlet form) power of it all.

Listen, you weren’t there, and you didn’t buy the book, so you wouldn’t know, but I had bolts of lightning at the ready sizzling in my fingers, cannons in my eyes, and piercing sword for a tongue, which caused no end of pain, but maybe those were the braces. Whatever the case, the old hag--as we shall call her for

want of a better description--was not happy when Eddie showed up to her garage sale one day. Their enmity had gone so far that she chose to play dumb and pretend that she did not quite understand what Eddie was hinting at when he asked if she had any old books--perhaps some with handwritten notations in the corners--or any slightly damaged crystal ball, maybe one with a crack in it that Eddie could have cheap. But once Eddie saw the bottle he knew that she was holding out on him and that she had the goods... and believe it or not, that bottle IS what this story is all about. Really.

I look at that bottle now. It is made of colored glass squares--and other odd little bits and shapes--welded together with lead--or pewter, but it's probably lead--as if the entire thing was some sort of three dimensional stained glass window turned into a perfume bottle or an oil and vinegar salad dressing decanter. To look at it now, it seems so old, so broken, so cracked, but at the time... It was magical. And it was! If you have not grown too old and too jaded, I am sure that you can see it for a moment through the wonder of a young boy's eyes. Outside, in the bright morning sun, the bottle glowed with a life and intensity all its own. It had a... aura about it. I cannot begin to tell you how it sparkled, how the sunlight caught its color, and how its many facets danced in the light. If anything among this pile of refuse, this old hag's junk was worth even a dime, this was it.

"How much?" Eddie may have asked, and the old hag may have started at five dollars, but under the power of Eddie's stare--just as he learned not threateningly, but with confidence, inner determination, and knowledge that the universe will do right by you... Well, it was either some arcane power or the power of ignorance, youth, and endless persistence that caused Grams to drop down to two dollars, then one, and finally in--desperate--exasperation to ask, "How much do you have?"

"Fifty cents," Eddie offered amiably. It was all he had... well, that and like an undeniable magical presence full of untold power, but we'll get into that in a bit. Money wise, he had fifty cents. Even Eddie could see that the bottle was worth more, lots

more. It would probably sell for a hundred... if not a thousand dollars, but Eddie did not have that much. If he had had a fiver, he would have given it to the lady, but he did not, and so as he mulled over the possibility of mowing her lawn, or spending an hour pulling out some weeds, but unbeknownst to him at the same time his powerful spirit allies, his shamanistic animal forces, and the unseen effects of countless hours in meditation and scence channeling exercises came to his rescue... for the old crone was thinking on her own. It did not take her as long as Eddie to come to the realization that giving the boy the bottle was a small price to be had for getting rid of the kid for the rest of the day.

“Just take it,” she said, “and get out of here,” and so--without further ado--Eddie did.

What a find! What a purchase!

Eddie ran home cradling the magical bottle, and then when he was alone in his room with the curtains drawn tight, he rubbed the lamp. Nothing happened of course. This is not fiction my friends... or rather this is fiction, but the true to life kind, the kind that blurs the edges and folds together that which is real and that which is not, sort of like what reality is actually like for one such as Eddie, but then not, because, like I said, this is fiction.

Aren't you glad we got that straightened out? The bottom line is, nothing happened. When Eddie rubbed the bottle for the first, second, or third time. Nothing happened. Nothing. Nada. Zippo.

OK. Granted, he may have felt the bumpy contours of the vessel where the lead and glass met, and perhaps his sense of hope, elation, and wonder sort of waned, but as to a Genie, Djini, or Jeannie. Nada. Not even a little wisp of smoke. Eddie had clearly gotten a dud. Never even crossed his mind until this very moment that perhaps that old hag had sold him and empty on purpose just to spite the lad, but no matter.

It made no difference. Whatever Eddie tried nothing worked and he tried it all. He tried fiddling with the stopper, filling the

bottle with water, wine, and olive oil--and considering the cracks this was a pretty messy endeavor, but certainly worth trying. I mean, after all, for an honest to goodness Jeannie, it was worth trying... anything. So Eddie placed the bottle--or the lamp as he sometimes called it--in his protective circle. He purified it--according to the ancient mysterious ways that he is bound not to share (and hey, if they're going to tell you the secrets for \$4.99, you're going to have to expect a catch or two) and then, when even that failed, he put a candle in the stopper, put it on his shelf, used it as a mystical light source for special (i.e. romantic) occasions, and more or less forgot about it.

Years would pass before Eddie would buy another bottle. It's not because he learned anything from that first the experience. Eddie had faith, and that pretty much trumps science and reason every time--that's why faith is so powerful--so it was not because he had learned from his mistakes that Eddie refrained from buying a second bottle, it was simply lack of opportunity. Not any old discarded soda bottle will do. Magical bottles are not as common as fictional journals and paranormal exposes would have you believe. Trust me, they're not. So although it is true that a certain sense of disappointment and betrayal lingered in Eddie's heart, it all disappeared in an instant the second he saw the second magical bottle. Eddie could hear it call out to him--metaphorically if not literally--and the bottle promised Eddie things that the now slightly older lad would not be able to obtain any other way... fulfillment, his heart's desire, and one of those magical Jeannie's like he had seen on TV. Sadly this second bottle did not live up to its promises either, nor did the third, or the fourth, or the fifth.

But hey! What a collection! Five makes a collection, right? And Eddie had a good one going now. He had that first pint sized stain glassed bottle thingamajig, a Chianti bottle with a woven wicker basket for a bottom that was covered in wax (think candle holder), a bronze "Aladdin's Lamp" sort of thing, a tiny miniature copper tea kettle that just plain looked cool, a piece of blown glass that was mesmerizing and sparkly in the light the way nothing in



this world should and which cost way--way--too much, and then a dozen odd depression era bottles he had found in an abandoned dump during a camping trip, which hardly count as magical bottles, but sort of shielded the true nature of the collection from the scrutiny of nonbelievers and their damaging negative vibes. Trust me... I guess I've said that a lot, but still, trust me. There's nothing like a negative vibe or the presence of a cynical naysayer in the room to suck the magic--not to mention life--out of any gathering or party. Do your best to stay away from them.

Anyway, I'm not saying that's why none of the bottles worked, but for reasons... unknown, none of them did. To call them defective would be overly harsh, and not altogether accurate. Not everything is magical in this world. Some things are, and some things aren't. It's just the way of this Mysterious Universe, and sadly the bottles Eddie had obtained thus far simply contained neither Jeannie nor other magical power.

But the important point we were making in all of this was that Eddie had acquired a bunch of bottles and it was the start of a collection, so having nothing better to occupy his time, Eddie took to buying the things whenever the opportunity presented itself. He had watched enough TV and late night movies to know what a Jeannie bottle was supposed to look like--or an Aladdin's Lamp for that matter--and whenever possibly he let these populist ideas guide his selections.

And it is here that we shall let time slip by and fast forward, letting Eddie build his collection as he goes on with that thing called life, sight unseen.

When we rejoin him, Eddie will have aged. He is a grown man now. He has a house. Don't even begin to ask me how he manages to keep a job, but I'm guessing a key to this is a skill that he has developed over the years: to never--and I mean never, ever--answer a boss, coworker, or subordinate with any degree of honesty the question, What are you thinking about? Instead say something about the next quarters numbers or whatever, but never-

-like ever--respond with anything having to do with magic, UFOs, or the shape of the Earth. Simply grit your teeth, and tell them what they want to hear. In case you are wondering, the Earth is round. See. Even I can say it. Over time, it becomes easier and easier to lie, especially when your thoughts are unacceptable (and/or incomprehensible) to others, and the price for telling the truth is high, you simply learn to lie. Trust me on this.

And it's sort of odd, but when you become good enough at lying, they pay you to write them down and share them with others for entertainment purposes. Go figure. I mean there it is. Society has its own little inconsistencies, so don't even get in my face about how the world can't be flat and hollow at the same time. It can. It is. The sooner you accept it, the sooner you can worry about the imminent invading dinosaur hordes (on account of the melting polar icecaps, don't you know), but I digress. The fact is, accepting certain things as truth, simply makes existence easier--or at least more fun. Sort of like how Eddie accepted that although the world was a magical place--it had to be--for whatever reason, he was unable to see it as it truly was, or bring his desires to fruition.

For example, astral travel eluded him. The ethereal ocean would not return his calls. Tarot, dice, pendants, astrology, and remote viewing: they were worse than throwing darts. Eddie simply did not have the touch. He did not have the knack, or as they say, he did not have the gift. Still, he could enjoy the dream, play the game, continue with his studies, and just keep on keeping on.

Believe it or not, he had a good job, and what with having purchased the Secrets of the Universe for a mere \$4.99 when he was a child, he had now had money to burn on more expensive pursuits. Sure, he could have spent it on vacations, big screen TVs and the like, but he preferred owning an array of crystal balls. Sure they were fuzzy, out of focus things that didn't seem to get good reception, but as we've said, that seemed to be a personal

problem, akin to operator error, and not something inherent in the equipment.

Along with the crystals, Eddie had acquired a sizable collection of tarot cards including several hand painted decks from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. And trust me, to hold them in your hands is to feel their power--regardless of one's own ability (or lack thereof) to channel an accurate reading. But rather than drift off into a discussion on the tarot and its myriad uses, we were going down Eddie's collections, and along with the rest, the pendants, the rings, the incense holders, the mortar and pestles, and all the rest, the one which remained most dear to his heart was the same one, which had began it all: the Aladdin's Lamps, and magical bottle collection.

Being happily flush with money--if not common sense--Eddie had a standing order with all of the antique stores within a hundred mile radius of where he lived. The proprietors of these establishments knew that it was in their own best interest to contact Eddie first whenever something likely came in. You know, send him an email with a picture of the item, or whatever. He was a buyer--a live one, as they like to say--and willing to pay top dollar for any item that called out to him. Of course, antique dealers are an eccentric lot, and not known for being up on the latest in technology, so Eddie did not always get a photo with an email. Sometimes all he got was a phone call with a less than detailed description. "It's a bottle. It's old. It looks like crap. It's just the type you always buy. Trust me you'll like it." Or, as is the case in the particular instance in which we are interested, all Eddie might get is a mysterious letter in the mail.

Mr. Eddie Takosori.

I have heard about your Collection, and something which might interest you has come into my possession.

Yours truly,

Signed, the proprietor of the antique store you've never heard of, much less visited, which also happens to be some distance away.

P.S. Don't bother to bring your wife along. I am sure she has better things to do.

Perhaps being the very man in mind when Barnum coined his famous saying (i.e. a sucker), Eddie was on his way to the distant shop the very next day. Sadly his wife had other plans, but she assured him that the girl who worked at that store was very good looking and it would be worth his while to flirt with her.

Odd words for a wife to give her husband, but then without any further explanation Kelly kissed Eddie and traipsed--and I do believe traipsed is the right word--right out the door. Not to be seen again until much later in the story.

Now, with a set up like that, or with a set up like that if you knew the slightest bit about Eddie and his entirely hot wife and they're... um, relationship, you might be a bit surprised to learn that when he finally got to the antique store the girl behind the counter was not his beloved wife, but was in fact a totally different girl. Hot. True. Very desirable in her own way, but not his wife. Of this Eddie was fairly certain, and seeing as how they didn't have what you might call an "open" relationship, and in actuality, quite the reverse, Eddie was a bit dumbstruck.

"Can I help you," the girl might have asked, and although normally quite witty, charming, and very attentive to the opposite sex, Eddie soundly found himself at a loss for words--if after reading this far, you can imagine such a thing.

"Um," Eddie said, as he sort of tried to check out the girl, and not at the same time. If you're a guy, I'm sure you know what I mean, and if you're a girl, well then, Eddie was probably coming off as a bit of a creep.

"Yeah? What?" the girl asked again eager to hold up her end of the conversation. From there, I don't remember the exact words, but I do know she was wearing a very--like very--tight t-

shirt and a pair of jeans to match, which--for whatever reason--I feel is important to point out, or at least to linger over for a moment in one's mind's eye.

"Did you want something?" the girl might have asked again, even though it had just been made clear that we weren't going to go through the conversation painful awkward moment by painful awkward moment, so without further ado, we shall hint that Eddie found the presence of mind to reach into his pants and whip out... the letter.

"Oh, right," the girl said as she--in turn--reached behind the counter and pulled out what was quite possibly the ugliest looking piece of crap Eddie had ever seen in his entire life. It would be an understatement to say that Eddie could not help but be a little disappointed in the... um, item.

But, OK. Fair enough. The bottle, the whole thing had a certain arcane, magical feel to it, but it also had one of those, You've got to be kidding, and, Where will I put it? aura about it as well. It really wasn't the type of piece--of crap--that would fit into his collection--anywhere--but perhaps I should describe the offending bottle before we go any further.

To start with the bottle itself had a rounded bottom and stood on a stand. Without a doubt, the stand was the nicest part of the entire set. It was hand carved of wood, with light and dark colored inlays, done well, but not too well, as if it was made by someone who was only going to do this the once, but who had decided that they were going to do the best possible job that they could manage--you know, sort of like a labor of love. Anyway, the pattern on the inlayed wood was abstract chaos, but if you stared at it you could see things, which is always a good sign for a magical piece, and Eddie liked the base very much, but the bottle itself... well, it looked like crap. At slightly more than a foot tall, it appeared to be late century glassware, maybe it was intended to be a beaker, or a test tube, I suppose they have a special name for those bulbous lab bottles, but I'm just stalling, because that is not what the eye would settle on first. It looked like it was filled with... um, sewage water,

or if you've been to college, bong water. Basically, the contents looked nasty, poisonous, and quite possibly hazardous, so being the brainchild that he was, Eddie immediately lifted the bottle off the stand and gave it a good shake. The girl behind the counter only smiled, it is however a testament to her fearless bravery that she didn't duck and run. Anyway, as cute as she is, she's really not important really important to the rest of the story, so she's just going to fade into the distance... but then, you know how some girls are, refusing to go away, so if you'd like, you can imagine that she said, "Yeah. I did that too. It's kind of like a snow globe." You know, if someone were to make a snow globe out of bong water, decomposed cigarette butts, shredded beer bottle labels, and whatever chemical and/or biological waste they happened to have lying around.

But still, something like that... well, it was interesting. It was captivating, and the more you looked at it, the more you would see the swirling layers of the different chemicals interacting with each other (probably just oil and water), the strands of reflective whatevers (probably bought at a craft store), the iridescent crystals (Milar graffiti sprinkles?) and other whatnots... well, if you were Eddie, the more you looked at it, the more you would see the thought, care, and potential of the piece. And then you'd have to stop for a moment and ask yourself, What were the odds of ever finding another one like it?

"It's a \$100 if you want it," the girl advised.

Eddie peeled his eyes away from the contents. The bottle wasn't clear enough to be made out of lab glass. There were no markings on the bottom. It was just straight blown glass. Nothing arty. Could have been made last week. Probably was. Eddie thought he'd seen something in the craft store a few weeks back. Come to think of it, he'd probably seen something like it in Kelly's closet just a few days ago. Besides, the thing didn't even have a proper plug. Not one that looked like it would hold for any length of time anyhow.

“Looks like someone just kept on cramming candle after candle in the thing,” the girl commented, and so it did, but not just candles but straw and other stuff going a solid six inches down into the neck of the bottle making some sort of impromptu, afterthought of a plug.

“Is that a paper clip?” Eddie asked.

“Yeah, sort of looks that way,” the girl agreed.

Eddie made a face. It was obviously crap, but the base was good, real nice actually, and he didn't like the idea of having driven out all this way, just to go back home empty handed, so he made a lowball offer, “How about \$50?”

“Sure. Whatever,” the girl responded not even trying to negotiate. “I'm supposed to take whatever you offer for it, so \$50's good.”

And there, it was done.

Or maybe she had said, “Kelly said I'd get \$100.”

And maybe Eddie had given her \$50 for the bottle and \$50 for the effort, though considering everything, it might have been a bit generous.

No matter the details.

Eddie convinced the girl to give him a box and a bunch of newspaper to wrap the thing up. Not that he was so much concerned about the invaluable bottle breaking on the way home, as was concerned about how he'd ever get the muck out of his car's upholstery if it did. Like most every other bit of information in this story, individually they're not overly important, but it all adds up to a cohesive whole of sorts--or perhaps Eddie was worried about what the goo would cohere to, if the bottle were to break.

Whatever.

When Eddie got home, the contraption didn't look any better. His immediate thought was to use the stand for another bottle, but the new one, the slime filled one, wouldn't stand upright without the stand, so he left them together... and then, what the heck, he

rubbed the stupid thing. It had been a long time since Eddie had rubbed a bottle hoping for a Djini, but there was something about this one, that made it feel like a sure thing. Nonetheless, nothing happened, but then this should really not be a surprise to you. Craft store bottles filled with bog water do not magical creations make, but still, for whatever reason, Eddie had bought it. It was his, so he put it on the coffee table displaying it proudly, and after a while he noticed that it did have a wick coming out of the top of it, so Eddie found a book of matches and lit the plug, like it was a fuse or something.

Can you see the thing hiss, smoke, spurt, and spark? Don't ask me what Eddie was thinking. The thing was like a Molotov cocktail sitting in his living room, right next to a thousand dollar natural quartz crystal ball with real gold leaf inclusions, and a hand lettered book of Magick from right before the civil war (which cost just a tad more than \$4.99, but oddly was not nearly as helpful or well thought out than the previously mentioned \$4.99 tome).

But back to the bottle with the smoking fuse. Clearly Eddie was not thinking clearly. A scum bomb explosion was not going to increase the value of any of the priceless antiques--occult or otherwise--scattered about the room, not to mention what it would do to the rug, but apparently Eddie was "tired and not thinking straight," or at least that's what he'd say to his wife later, but for now the danger of it all simply didn't occur to him, and was it so unreasonable to assume that someone would put a candle in the neck of a bottle without expecting someone else to light it?

No. It wasn't. Or, isn't. Or, whatever.

No matter the syntax, Eddie was quite relaxed and was rather enjoying the crisp cinnamon smell that the candle-plug-fuse thing was giving off. It hadn't gone into high gear yet, so at the moment it was very pleasant, soothing... beguiling and misleading. It was really more like an incense candle than anything else. Not to worry, that would change in a bit, but for now it was very relaxing, and so Eddie settled down for some light reading of an ancient astrological handbook. Need I mention it? Eddie was out cold--



sound asleep--in seconds flat. Astrology is about the driest most boringist subject there is. Saying that its mind numbingly dull doesn't give one an accurate picture. Words are simply incapable of conveying the utter lack of passion Eddie feels for the subject, or the incredibly depths of inanity that particular field of study sinks to on a regular basis. If you'd like, you can think of astrology as the String Theory of the occult world, but then knowing nothing of String Theory, I'm sure the comparison is inaccurate, weak, and dimwitted. You'll have to take the source of the metaphor into account and modify it as appropriate. I must apologize. Sadly, it is the best I can do.

Now, I couldn't tell you how long Eddie slept. For a few minutes? An hour? Maybe half the night? I don't know. What I do know is that all Heck broke loose when Eddie finally did wake up, or perhaps more accurately, all Heck was breaking loose, and so Eddie woke up. I perhaps should also add that the narrative gets even more squirrely at this point, but then, as with most things, the more you think on it, the more it will make sense, so if you just let it sit and gel, I'm sure a satisfactory resolution will emerge and rise to the surface.

Anyway, Eddie likes to think that he woke up because of the fire alarm. His wife Kelly likes to think that he woke up on account of her yelling and screaming--she likes to think that it has some effect, so you know, play along if you want to--while the Djini that had been called forth from the smoking bottle knows that it was her special magic that had caused the whole episode to come into being in the first place.

And perhaps right there I should just pause and provide a little aside regarding the names. I, the author, am named Eddie Takosori. Perhaps you've heard of me? No? Well, I suppose that's understandable. Anyway, my lead character--the hero as we like to call them in the trade--is also named Eddie. This is not just a cheap ploy to confuse the issue and blur the distinction between what is real and what is not. I mean, it is just that, but it is also like

a good idea. I mean, if there is some parallel dimension that springs to life every time I write a story, it only makes sense to give the good bits to myself. Right? So, I play a role in most every story I write, typically the good one. I think it's a good, safe policy, and ties back nicely to what your mom said long ago, or at least what my mom said, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything." Well, I take the same tact with writing, and so if I'm not willing to be the lead, I don't write it. If nothing else, this way I don't to deal with character revolts, and the policy has saved me a lot of strife from the Fictional Characters Guild. Trust me, if you're a writer, you don't want to get on The Guild's bad side.

I think all of that is pretty straight forward and self explanatory, but there does remain a problem within all that which one might not see at first, but--once again--trust me, if you were married and you let your wife read your stories, it would emerge soon enough. Basically, if I'm going to write myself into the lead, then I have to write my wife Kelly in as the love interest. It's just the way it is. If you're married, you know, and if you're not, well, you'll just have to take my word on it... or if that sort of sounds like a cop out... How to explain this?

Let's just say, exactly where reality begins and ends is sort of blurred for me, and well, having married me, Kelly might sort of share the same default of character when it comes to being able to discern between what is real, and what is not. Without going into great detail, I'll just say it's not worth sleeping on the couch for a week, a month, or longer just because I let Eddie have an affair with another woman, or spend too much time gazing at some girl in an antique store--no matter how cute and ogle-worthy said girl may be, and no matter that it was all a set up by my wife in the first place!

Actually, considering how confusing my explanations usually are, that all that seems pretty straight forward, so as to not let that sense of false security settle in, I should mention that anyone who has ever been over to my house for dinner or who knows me or my

wife personally may have noticed a sort of similarity between Eddie the character and Eddie the writer. Once again, this is intentional, and intentionally confusing, or at least hopefully it's confusing. I'd hate to think you could just jump into my life and understand my deepest darkest secrets within moments of reading one of my stories... but then if you can't, that probably doesn't say much for me as a writer.

Oh, well. No matter. I'm sure the truth is right there obvious for all to see, or available for the viewing should you wish to tease it all out. The real objective of all of this was to make you forget where we were in the story, because if you know what's happening, then you'd be one step ahead of Eddie, and that wouldn't be fair, because it is his story after all. I guess what I'm saying is that I'm not really altogether sure about the aforementioned sequence of events. Kelly will say I was just sleeping away like a baby while the house was filling with smoke and I would have died for sure if she hadn't come home right then. She even goes so far as to give herself a few lines of dialogue in this version. According to her, she yells something like, "You weren't supposed to light the stupid thing," only when she says stupid it sort of comes out as an unprintable expletive.

Of course, you could believe her, but I was right there... I mean, Eddie was right there, and that's not what happened. The fire alarm went off, and Eddie woke up.

**BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!**

Those fire alarm things are loud and annoying. There is no way I--or that is Eddie--could have slept through that racket, so it is much more likely that I--or Eddie--woke up from the smoke alarm, and although the Aladdin's Lamp--or whatever we're going to call it--was sitting on the coffee table, going off like a smoke bomb, and filling the house with this putrid--brain cell killing, toxic--smoke, Eddie decided that the thing to do was to grab a chair and proceed to swat at the smoke alarm in an attempt to knock the stupid battery out of the stupid thing.

Now don't be going on about how Eddie maybe should have grabbed the bottle and thrown it outside. This is what Kelly would say for the weeks to come, but that's just ridiculous. Besides, if you're even going to buy that Kelly was there, or that she has a different version than me, you should perhaps also concede that this whole thing might just be a very elaborate bit of role playing that we do on occasion to spice up our lives and that all of the smoke was really coming from a half dozen sticks of incense that we had stuck in the aforementioned bottle to create a bit of ambience. Basically, what I am saying is, you've got to take anything Kelly says--or even thinks--with a grain of salt (which oddly enough is what us witches do whenever we want to neutralize something, but that is neither here nor there).

Anyhow, the smoke alarm was going off like a banshee--whatever those are, but I'm guessing they're quit loud--and Eddie was just whacking the heck out of it with a broomstick. By the way, we're witches--or wanna-be witches--so just trust me, we've got broomsticks lying around like you would not believe. Not that anybody sweeps anything, but we got the brooms, and that's the important thing, so Eddie used one of them to turn off the alarm, and then he went around opening up all the windows, and stuff like that. The bottle was still pouring out smoke, but by now, it just looked positively dangerous, so he wasn't going to grab it or go anywhere near it. So like, what was he supposed to do?

If this were a movie, this would be where the heavy bass would kick in, so if you're reading this with a good stereo system nearby put something on that makes the subwoofer go, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! so your heart gets into the rhythm of it all, because Eddie is about to see Kelly again... or, I mean, the Genie for the first time!

Now I know I'm married, but if you're going to role play you've got to cut your partner some slack, so let's just assume this all took place when Eddie was a bachelor, or that he is a bachelor--not that I--or he--is dreaming of being unmarried, but because I

have a story to tell, I'm going to need a little slack, and my neck hurts if I sleep on the couch.

Are we fine with all that?

That's a question Kelly?

OK.

Good.

So there Eddie was. His house was filled with smoke, but through it all, through the haze and whatnot, he can see the VISION OF BEAUTY HERSELF. This, of course would be the Djini, coincidentally named Kelly. I have it on high authority that most Djini are. You might think they it gets confusing, but they use little qualifiers for each other, like Djini-in-the-bottle-Kelly or Djini-out-of-the-bottle-Kelly, and so forth, but we will get to all that in a moment. Right now we should just take her in. Feast your eyes on her body and that sort of thing.

My oh my Kelly is a hot one. Talk about beautiful... and sexy. Hot darn! My Kelly is one of those Polynesian/everything else under the sun half-breeds, and she got like the best half from everyone and everything. Long black hair, sweet brown eyes, skin to match, and just the most curvaceous body you have ever laid your eyes on.

Anyhow, to bring this all back to the story we were telling, after all these years, it would appear that Eddie finally got lucky and bought a magical lamp. Coincidentally, and much to his surprise and delight, those bottles don't have a lot of room in them for clothes and what not, so Dream-Jeannie-Kelly comes out of the bottle all naked and stuff. OK. She's not completely naked, but I like the word. Picture me as a thirteen year old boy if you'd like and then have me say, "Naked! Naked! Naked!" over and over again, because I think it sounds dirty, hot, and very, very alluring. Of course, Kelly isn't completely naked--hubba hubba. But rather, she's got like a little strip of cloth on. She's sort of using it like a scarf, or a veil, but I still think, Naked! Naked! Naked! says it best.

Hot-cha-cha! But I do love our Saturday night role playing sessions. I for one am glad I went dice-less if you know what I mean.

Wouldn't you know it though, it turns out that everything you and I know about Djini, or at least what I thought I knew about Djini was wrong. Unlike the TV show, Kelly-Jeannie's are quite happy to show off their bellybuttons (and everything else too for that matter), but since I'm the one telling the story, that's not the real oddity. I mean, I think we all sort of know that the TV show painted all of Jeannie-kind as a bit flaky. Anyhow, the big thing about Djini is that they can split in half. Really, I don't know how, why, or all of the particulars. It's not like I got a PhD in biological engineering, microbiology, or genetics, or something like that. I'm just a simple guy who works 9-5 splicing genes and sequencing DNA for a living. What do I know? I mean, if Kelly says Djini can split in half, then that's just the way it is. No need to work out the exact biochemical mechanisms behind it.

Another important idea that should be tossed in there somewhere is that Djini are usually like ancient old... haggardly even, but if they split in half, each half is only like half as old, and then if they split again, they get younger and younger, till they're like downright babelicious and edging dangerously near the age of consent. Not nearly as interesting, but probably important to the story on some level, is the fact that as they split, they can also put different bits of their personality in one body and other bits in the other.

So like for example, while we were sitting there and talking, cause that's what I'd do, I'm a talkative type guy. Anyhow as one of the Kelly-Djini or Kelly-D's is talking to me, a second is holding my hand, a third is feeding me peeled grapes, a fourth is manicuring my toes, a fifth is baking chocolate chip cookies (to perfection I might add), while a sixth is using one of the aforementioned brooms to actually clean up, and you see, right there is the thing. One of the Kelly-D's--cleaning-Kelly-D I guess--was actually cleaning up! In truth, I didn't think Kelly had it in

her anywhere--like anywhere--to do actual housework, but there you go. Some small part way down, deep inside of Kelly likes scrubbing the toilet, getting between the tiles with a toothbrush, and making sure the whites are as white as they can possibly be. Who knew?

I know most folks are going to be asking about that wish thing next. Jeannie's are supposed to grant wishes right? Well, Eddie was sort of wondering the same thing, but then all of his wishes were sort of coming true. I mean, even if half the time it only looked like there was the one girl--Kelly--in the room, she was always--and I do mean always--making his dreams come true--like she usually does--so Eddie didn't want to rock the boat and ask about the wishes. I mean, you know if Eddie asked about the wishes the Djini sitting next to him, I think it was sit-on-the-couch-next-to-me-while-whispering-sweet-words-into-my-ear-Kelly, anyhow, Eddie was pretty sure that if he asked Kelly about the wishes, she was just going to take it personal. You know, something along the lines of, "What! I'm not good enough for you! What would you wish for?" and whatever Eddie would say from there would just be used against him to make his life miserable and insure that he was sleeping on the couch for a fortnight, so rather than mention any stupid wishes, Eddie just sort of nodded his head and agreed when Kinky-Kelly said that Baking-Kelly was in the kitchen making cookies. He even had the good sense to comment on how good they smelled as Kelly ripped open a bag of Oreos.

Without going into the details, variations, or contorted positions involved, endless iterations of this kept up throughout the night, and it wasn't until sometime well after dawn that the duo stumbled off exhausted into bed. When he awoke the next morning--or towards mid-afternoon if you're particular about the facts--Eddie might have thought it was all a dream or something. I mean, there he was, right next to Kelly and she looked like she always does.

Now, I don't mean to sound critical, but being in love doesn't mean you're blind, and the fact is, Kelly simply isn't as young as she once was, and well, she likes to party. Let's just say the years have not been kind to her body, or maybe they have and she's just at that age. I'm not complaining. I'm just saying. So when Eddie woke up in the morning, he sort of noticed how old this dream girl, how old the Djini lying next to him in bed really was, or looked. And it wasn't in like a negative, judgmental way. It was more like, gee, she's old... I wonder what we could do about that... you know, on account of her being a magical Djini and all.

It was a problem, a quandary to be sure, and nothing to get mad at Eddie about, but a reason to love him all the more, because he was trying to figure out a solution. Problems of this sort are difficult to work on though, especially on an empty stomach, so Eddie went off to fix breakfast for the two of them, because he was thoughtful. Cooking bacon and eggs for both of them was the plan, and so as the bacon popped and sizzled in the pan, and because the stuff takes like forever and a day to cook, Eddie wandered around the house. As he did, he took in the evidence--or remains if you like--from the preceding nights festivities, and then sat down on the couch--for like just a second--as he looked at the bottle. You really had to hand to whoever put it all together. I mean, getting the bottle to an antique shop miles away, getting it to smoke like that, and then filling it up with some primo body oil. It really was thoughtful. Of course, the bottle was empty now, but it could be refilled, you know, to be used again, not that Eddie would need to. He had the Djini, he had Kelly. I guess the point would be that Eddie loved Kelly with all of his heart and she obviously loved him too, and not just because he'd rescued her from hellish life in a one bedroom studio apartment, or a magical--if cramped--bottle.

I'm just putting it all into perspective. These were the nice, kind, loving thoughts that were going through Eddie's mind while the bacon was frying, turning crispy, and then sort of going from



brown, to black, to a burning fire on the stove. It would be at this point that the fire alarm started doing its thing again.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

And then Kelly stumbled out of bed to yell with great annoyance, “Turn that stupid thing off,” with the stupid once again being replaced by a more colorful adjective.

Anyhow, Kelly is the forgiving sort, and so she saw what Eddie was trying to do, and wasn't that cute... nice, or thoughtful, but clearly not helpful, so she shoed him out of the kitchen.

Now don't ask me how she did it, because like I said, I haven't a clue, but I swear to Gra'gl or whatever god of old that you're partial to that Kelly must have split in two again, because one girl is frying up breakfast and the other comes and sits down next to me--I mean Eddie--on the couch.

“You going to watch the game today?” Kelly may have asked having already forgiven her adoring husband for having burned breakfast.

“Yeah. I was planning on it.”

“I'm going to go shopping then.”

And that was that.

You know, nothing special. Just another day in the Takosori household.

When you get right down to it, it's amazingly odd how quickly things can settle down into the normal, ordinary, ho-hum everyday flow of things, so maybe that I Dream of Jeannie TV show had the right angle and was closer to the truth than I had ever given it credit for. Anyhow, the rest of the day was pretty normal--or as normal as can be when you share your life with a veritable vision of beauty and charm. It was just two people getting through another day, of course, we're husband and wife, so it's perhaps a bit more fun than the TV show would let on, but still, it comes down to brushing your teeth and stuff like that a lot of the time.

Whatever. The details can get boring. Just imagine that we spent a few hours together doing whatever it is that husbands and wives do. Perhaps I wrote. Perhaps she worked on a craft project.

A few hours pass by and then we get to the important sequence that occurs after Kelly went shopping and I watched the game, or that is to say, Shopping-Kelly went shopping, and Sit-on-the-couch-next-to-her-man-Kelly, Stand-by-her-man-Kelly, I-really-dig-football-Kelly, Go-Raiders-Kelly, and a few others along with me sat back on the couch, watched the game, and had a few beers.

“I’m the Kelly that likes football,” the first explained after a bit, but it wasn’t a surprise. We’ve already been over this.

“And I’m the one that just likes to sit next to you no matter what you are doing,” the second exclaimed happily not too concerned it was all a tad repetitive, while a third Kelly--not to be left out--called from the bathroom, “And I’m the one that likes to do housework.” You got to love Housework-Kelly. I know I do, but then you also need to be diplomatic about it, so Eddie replied, “I love you all,” and really, how could he not? But then the truth of the matter was, he loved some of them more than the others. It was understandable I think. I mean, Go-to-the-store-shop-for-expensive-knick-knacks-Kelly wasn’t really as much fun as Sexually-liberated-I’ll-do-anything-and-I-do-mean-anything-for-my-man-Kelly. I suppose those names get pretty long at times. I guess you can see why I decided to just call them all Kelly, or Kelly-G, or whatever.

Anyhow, the football game was pretty good, and the Raiders won. Yippie!

“Happy to oblige,” cooed Game-rigging-Kelly when it was all over and then it was time for Table-dance-Kelly (one of my personal favorites) to do her thing once more.

I won’t go into the details. The details are there, it’s just that we’ll not focus on them. When the game winning celebrations were over, it was clear that Dream-Kelly had something on her mind.

“What is it dear?”

“Well, you know how sometimes you like me... I mean us,” she said as she waived her hand around the empty room, “more than others.”

“Um,” and what is a guy supposed to say. It reeks of a set up. As in, “Does this dress make me look fat?” The proper answer is, Dear, no dress could ever make you look fat, at all times, period... unless I suppose it was one of those fat costume dresses in which case you really have to say yes to keep your credibility, but otherwise, go with no.

Kelly was a Djini though, so she could read my, or that is Eddie’s thoughts--not that those thoughts are ever particularly clear, but then what do you want? Kelly knew what she was up to however, when she said, “I was just thinking. Like if we, I mean I can split up, into Shopping-Kelly, Cooking-Kelly and all the rest, then I can split up into Petty-annoyance-Kelly, Hold-a-grudge-forever-Kelly and so on.”

“Um,” the wise man replied.

“Well, I was just thinking...” and then even though it’s a story, and past tense and all, we’ll just fade out and skip ahead so it’ll all be a surprise when we get there.

Or then again, maybe we won’t. Not exactly anyhow, because I’m really just a simple man. I don’t really know how she managed it. Anybody who has ever met us immediately realizes that Kelly is the brains of the outfit, so basically I just followed her lead.

What I do know is that she pulled a thread out of the veil scarf thing that came with the original Kelly-in-a-bottle-Djini. It was a nice blue scarf with golden threads, and as she pulled out a strand of silk she explained that this was the part of herself that resisted me, that prevented her from giving herself to me fully. I wasn’t about to deconstruct it. And really, if you find yourself in a similar situation, don’t analyze it. Kelly was being romantic and what more could Eddie ever hope for. Anyway, getting rid of the part of her that resisted me sounded good, so we said the muckety-muck ancient power words of old, Abracadabra, Presto Chango, and all the rest (that you would know if you invested that \$4.99 wisely, but I guess you were too busy buying Star Wars collector cards). Anyhow, once the words were said, blessing given to the

winds of the east and the west, and so on, we slipped that dangerous little thread back into the Magic Bottle where it belonged.

This then is exactly when Bitter-angry-I'm-going-to-kill-the-bastard-that-tries-to-imprison-me-Kelly walked through the door. She was livid. Insane with rage. But, Nice-kind-I'll-protect-you-Eddie-Kelly told me not to worry, and with a final flourish she corked the bottle.

“What was I upset about,” No-longer-raging-Kelly suddenly asked. Not that I would remind her... if, you know, like I knew, but then I wasn't really following along at this point and was just along for the ride. Like I said, Brains-of-the-outfit-Kelly is the... um, brains of the outfit.

Anyhow, as Post-raging-menopausal-Kelly was getting her bearings and drawing me into her sights, Nice-Kelly drew out another strand of silk and found another bottle to put it in. This seemed like a pretty neat trick, and if I'll-indulge-you-this-once-Kelly was will to play along, I figured I should take advantage of the situation, so we locked up Angry-you-watch-football-Kelly, Why-are-your-stories-so-stupid-all-the-time-Kelly, and I-want-to-go-dancing-Kelly before she changed her mind. It was really neat. With each one another thread went into another bottle, and then poof, Crazy-insane-jealous-Kelly was gone, locked away in a bottle.

It didn't take me very long to realize the wisdom of locking Kelly's resistant part first, or to be thankful I had such a large bottle collection, and once Your-collections-are-a-stupid-waste-of-money-Kelly was locked up, Kelly couldn't agree more, and after her resistance was gone, the rest of the Bad-Kelly's were just lining up, waiting to be locked away, so that's how we spent the afternoon.

Now, I know most folks aren't going to believe me. They're going to say, you've been collecting the bottles for a long time, and your wife is into some freaky... stuff. You're just playing with us and having a good laugh. And then they'll probably look at the

bottle on the coffee table filled with goo and the one on the floor behind the couch that sort of looks the same only it's kind of empty, and come to some kind of conclusion like this entire story is some kind of hoax or a put on...

And maybe it is. I mean, I've never gotten anywhere in the astral plane. I can't get a deck of cards--tarot or otherwise--to predict what kind of card IT IS, much less the roll of a die, the weather, or anything remotely important, but I do know one thing. Kelly is the most wonderful girl in the whole wide world and I would not trade her for anything. Everyday she gets better and better and better, as if every day she finds some little bit of herself that is inferior and unworthy of being called Kelly and she somehow manages to slough this part off and throws it away. But most of all, I know I'm never going to open that bottle of black goo we've got sitting on the coffee table, because I know what it contains is positively toxic.

Anyhow, that's my story. I hope you liked it, but now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to go. Kelly got a call last week from a jeweler up in the lake country about a multifaceted ring. It sort of sounds like the three stoned magical ring she's been searching like forever for. Me, I just hope knows what she really wants... and that she chooses her words like really, really, really carefully. Some of those Genies, have what you'd call bad attitudes, like really bad attitudes, like psychotically bad attitudes... and, well, when you get right down to it, their grip on reality is not what you might hope for in a sort of, mostly, kind of, all powerful magical being that is a few cards short of a full deck.

***Dream Jeannie***

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www.paufler.net  
And that's where the rest of Eddie Takosori's works may be  
found  
It's fiction, yada-yada, any resemblance is coincidental*