

## Genie for Sale – Cheap, Excerpt

Corbit picked up the lighter and took a proper look at it. Since no lamp or fancy bottle had been left behind, the genie was probably in the lighter. It was egg-shaped with a flat bottom, and had the approximate mass of a cantaloupe. It was surprisingly heavy for its size.

The thing was decorated with a whole lot of what looked like colourful jelly beans. Corbit touched one and it was cold and as hard as glass. Not jellybeans. He peered really close and they were so glittery, he didn't think they were glass either. If he wasn't mistaken, dozens of fabulous jewels were embedded into the metal of the lighter. They certainly sparkled like real diamonds, rubies, emeralds and sapphires. If they weren't fakes, the lighter was worth much much more than twenty dollars—it was worth a fortune. But a fortune wasn't as exciting as a real live genie!

Too impatient to wade through the document, Corbit rubbed his pajama sleeve vigorously against the metal. Since rubbing a genie's lamp was the standard way to summon a genie, at least according to the movies, he hoped it would work.

Nothing happened.

He tried again, still nothing.

With a shrug, he clicked the lighter to make a flame. It was the only other way that he could think of to summon his genie. He even added a loud, "Abracadabra, hocus pocus," just in case that would help with the summoning.

Corbit wasn't completely surprised, but he did almost drop the lighter, when it produced an energetic flame that sizzled like a birthday sparkler. A shimmering cloud of red and pink smoke swirled up from the sparking flame, which kept getting bigger and bigger. Corbit had to put the lighter down on the table before his pajama sleeves caught on fire. As soon as he released it, there was an explosive *poof* and a fogbank of red and pink smoke filled the kitchen. It smelled like some odd combination of strawberry bubblegum and rotting fruit.

The smoke alarm went off and Corbit flapped a handy newspaper under it until the earsplitting noise cut off. When he turned back around, the smoke had cleared enough for him to see that a red-skinned figure was seated cross-legged on the kitchen table. The figure didn't look any more like a genie than the genie's lawyer had. But who else could it be?

The man sitting on the table had an impressive pair of curved black horns jutting out of his bald red head. He was clad in a shiny red cape and tight red pants. The pants were scaly and tucked into black and gold knee-high boots. Corbit thought the strange looking stranger was wearing a fancy patterned shirt until the last of the haze sparkled away and he realized that he was looking at a bare chest with skin so utterly tattooed, you couldn't see any skin at all. The arms were also tattooed, with two super-realistic snakes that coiled around bulging biceps and forearms, and all the way down to the wrists. The bulging biceps were

real. Maybe his new genie had a whole gym inside the lighter and chomped steroids for breakfast. A wicked grin almost split his red face in two, and it looked permanent. The genie was chuckling in a wheezy sort of way. His eyes were as black as burnt-out coal pits, and not at all merry in spite of the chuckling.

In Corbit's opinion, his new genie looked exactly like a devil.