

GENIE-LOGY

By Jerry Rabuska

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CHARACTERS

ASHA: a high school upper-classman

MOTHER: Asha's mother

RAJIV a Genie

LATA: a friend of Asha's and, by her estimation, more popular

KUMAR: a math whiz

KAREENA: his younger sister

MOM: Kumar's and Kareena's mother

DAD: Kumar's and Kareena's father

JAZZY: a Genie, Rajiv's wife

GENIE: Rajiv's Mother

TEACHER: (M or F)

SARAH: a girl who's mastered the art of the insult

MRS: Sarah's mother, the woman who taught her

JOHNNY KUHN: a jock, and not very bright

CLERK: in Movie Rental Store (M or F)

PROP LIST

DVD boxes.

Books, backpacks, pens/pencils, other school items

Small electronic gadgets, such as i-pods, hand held computer games, cell phones

Printed out blogs.

Glasses

Small Digital Camera

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is set in several locations, so just a couple set items can be used to indicate each place. Asha's living room needs some basic furniture and a lamp for her to scrub. Her kitchen needs a table big enough for three characters to study, plus some shelving for the vases she cleans off. Scenes in a classroom can be set up easily by just a few chairs or desks; the prom scene can have balloons and banners—a banner setting the play at the producing school can add a nice touch. Several scenes are set in Asha's home, so that might be the "set" that deserves the most attention.

The play provides some interesting costume opportunities; the genies can be dressed up as exotic and magical, and there's a lot of "formalwear" that appears in inappropriate situations.

The play runs about 80-85 minutes; it can be done without intermission, or divided into two acts.

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ACT I

SCENE 1

(ASHA's living room. ASHA is sitting around wasting time, perhaps playing a video game or playing with a cell phone or dancing to an I-Pod. . . anything to show SHE's shirking her responsibility. Her mother enters and watches her disapprovingly for a short while.)

MOTHER: Now, remember what I told you.

ASHA: How can I **(mocking)** "remember what I told you?" You've spent all day giving me instructions. I've forgotten the first ninety.

MOTHER: What's the last thing I said to you?

ASHA: **(with an attitude)** If I don't pull my weight around the house, I can't go to the prom.

MOTHER: Exactly.

ASHA: Like that matters. I don't have a date for the prom. And it's tonight. So, there's really no point in me pulling my weight around here, is there? Sorry, but Coldplay is calling me. **(starts to go, her mother calls her back.)**

MOTHER: Asha! **(by her mother's tone of voice, ASHA knows SHE'd better pay attention. MOTHER starts treating her like SHE's a small child)** Do you know what *this* is called? **(holds up a rag)** It's a rag. And this? **(holds up a bucket)** A bucket of water! And this? **(showing her a broom)** This is a broom. At your age, you should be at least somewhat familiar with these primitive implements.

ASHA: I have homework.

MOTHER: I have children! And I still find the time.

ASHA: Well, since you have the time and I am obviously very busy, then you should do the cleaning. **(SHE tries to go back to what SHE was doing originally)**

MOTHER: Now! And when I come back, it had better be done.

ASHA: Where are you going?

MOTHER: Out. Shopping.

ASHA: Mom, that's not fair!

MOTHER: Last Saturday you went out while I stayed home and cleaned. And the Saturday before that. And the Saturday before that. And the-

ASHA: Okay, I get the point.

MOTHER: (**hands ASHA a dust rag and takes away her “gadget”**) I don't think you do. It's about time you learn some responsibility around here.

ASHA: On prom night? What a fine time to start. Don't you remember your high school prom? How important it was?

MOTHER: When I went to the prom, they played disco. All night! We Boogie-Oogie-Oogied, we Rocked-Freaked, and then we did the Hustle. Some prom. And you don't even like disco. (**motions to the rag**) Enjoy. (**exit**)

ASHA: Disco. Blah blah blah. Clean this, Cinderella! Clean that, Cinderella! I want a fairy godmother. I can't believe it's the night of the prom, and no one asked me out. No one! (**holds up the rag**) Every girl's dream. (**starts to dust, badly**) There. That's done. (**SHE dusts something else, disinterested**) That's done. (**SHE picks up a lamp on an end table.**) There, that's done. (**looks again**) No, it's not. How did ketchup get on this lamp? (**SHE wipes it harder as SHE talks, getting progressively more irritated with her situation**) How was your prom, Asha? Oh, it was fine. I spent all night dusting off my mother's furniture. Then I went to the dance and I was *treated* like furniture. Well, I'll tell you what, boys. If you're too good to ask Asha to the prom, then Asha is too good to go to the prom. I'll stay home and watch Oxygen. Lifetime! Oprah! Montel! Judge Judy! Telemundo! (**enter RAJIV, a genie**) Who are you?

RAJIV: *Namaste!*

ASHA: Get out of my house or I'll call the police!

RAJIV: Not so fast.

ASHA: Okay. (**SHE talks slower**) Get out of my house or I'll call the police. Unless you want to take me to the prom, I suggest you high tail it out the door.

RAJIV: As I said: *Namaste*. It's Hindu for “what's happenin', sistah?”

ASHA: I hardly think so. And anyway, (**imitating him**) nothing is happening, brothah.

RAJIV: Okay, I was a little liberal with the translation. But you get the point.

ASHA: The only point I get is breaking and entering. (**hands him a broom**) But here. Get to work.

RAJIV: Don't you know who I am?

ASHA: How the heck am I supposed to know who you are?

RAJIV: You set me free! I'm the Genie of the lamp.

ASHA: Yeah, whatever.

RAJIV: Really. (**introducing himself**) Rajiv Subramaniam, at your service.

ASHA: Cool. Rajiv. Asha. (**hands him some implements**) Mop. Sweep. Move it. (**SHE starts to figure things out**) I wish you would help

clean up. (**RAJIV hesitates, then starts to clean up**) There. Now, we have to get a few things straight. Like what are you talking about?

RAJIV: (**as HE cleans up**) My spirit has been locked inside the lamp for generations.

ASHA: The lamp isn't that old. We got it new at an import store.

RAJIV: Well, the truth? Someone broke my original oil lamp in Bombay, and I escaped into one of these new-fangled electrical gizmos. I was smuggled into this country in a cargo ship. More jobs, they tell us. Then everything's outsourced back to India. I've been handling tech service calls for Genies with power outages. So, that's my genie-ology.

ASHA: We've had that lamp for years. Why now. . .

RAJIV: Well this house is a disaster! No one's really dusted this lamp the way it should have been. And be glad. If your mother was my master, I'd have to grant her every wish. I don't think you want that. You'd be studying, cleaning. . . and she'd wish Coldplay right out of your I-pod. But once *you* started scrubbing the lamp, I realized; here's a girl with some responsibility.

ASHA: Genies don't come from India. They come from Saudi Arabia. Or the Sinai Peninsula, or something like that.

RAJIV: Pick up the lamp.

ASHA: What?

RAJIV: Pick it up. (**SHE looks at the bottom of the lamp**) Now read it.

ASHA: Made in India.

RAJIV: Exactly. Stop being so suspicious. Usually by now people have asked me for stuff.

ASHA: I don't know about that. Are you one of those Genies with a moral to every wish?

RAJIV: After being cooped up in the lamp, I'm ready to "shake it down mama." What's your point?

ASHA: Meaning every time I get what I wish for, something bad happens to someone else. Like I want a lot of money and then someone dies, and I get the inheritance. That kind of thing.

RAJIV: What do you take me for?

ASHA: (**gives RAJIV a broom**) Here, start sweeping. (**HE does**)

RAJIV: This is humiliating. (**hands it back**) You do it. Apparently you're not as responsible as I thought.

ASHA: You're my genie, not my mother

RAJIV: I've been in that lamp for your entire high school career. There's nothing you've done in here that I haven't seen.

ASHA: (**pause, as they exchange glances, and SHE starts cleaning faster, until the doorbell rings, pause**) Well?

RAJIV: What?

ASHA: Are you going to get that?

RAJIV: I don't know who it is.

ASHA: **(testing)** I wish you'd answer the door.

RAJIV: Well, all right. That's a stupid wish, though. Petty.

ASHA: It works? This could be fun! **(RAJIV gets the door. It's ASHA's friend LATA, dressed for the prom, and kind of snooty.)**

RAJIV: Good afternoon, young lady.

LATA: Yeah, whatever. **(pushes her way past the RAJIV and twirls around in the dress)** Well, Asha, how do I look?

ASHA: **(bitter, sort of leaning on her broom handle)** You look like you're going to the prom. So who cares?

LATA: **(proud, and full of herself)** I talked my parents out of \$500. And that's just the corsage.

ASHA: Lata, I don't care. If you're going to stand around and boast, you can help clean up.

LATA: What, and get dust on my prom dress?

ASHA: I don't even know why you have that on!

LATA: To make you jealous. **(sees RAJIV again)** Who's he?

RAJIV: *Namaste*, Lata.

ASHA: He's Rajiv, an Indian Genie.

LATA: Genies don't come from India.

ASHA: **(holds up the bottom of the lamp)** See? We've been lied to all along.

LATA: Oh. Cool! You're hot, for a Genie. **(to ASHA)** So, what have you wished for?

ASHA: So far? That he help clean up the living room and answer the door.

LATA: Oh, you are so conservative! Ask for money! Glamour! Looks! A tummy tuck! A nose job! **(starts looking ASHA over)** Let's see, what else can we firm up? Let's start with. . .

ASHA: Lata!

LATA: And fast. You don't have a prom date.

ASHA: Oh, all right. **(thinks)** I wish I had a million dollars. **(pause)** Now.

RAJIV: Nope.

ASHA: I wished for it, and you have to give it to me.

RAJIV: You're too young to handle all that financial responsibility. I'm just looking out for you. So, no.

ASHA: How dare you!

RAJIV: I'm from India. Indian genies learn to say no.

ASHA: All right. I wish I'd get all A's.

GENIE: Again, abrogating responsibility. You need to study, young lady. You don't want to get to college with a 4.0 average and get stuck in remedial math.

ASHA: How do you know what I want? I want straight A's and a million dollars, and I want it on the table right now!

LATA: I think this Genie's got you over a barrel. Put him back in the lamp.

ASHA: I don't know how. I don't even know how he came out of it. Tell you what, he's useless. You take him!

LATA: I don't need him. I already have straight A's, my family has a Lithuanian maid, and **(rubbing it in)** I have a date. You might try wishing for that.

ASHA: All right. **(takes a deep breath)** I wish. . . I wish that Johnny Kuhn would take me to the prom.

LATA: **(SHE processes this and realizes. . .)** That's *my* date!

ASHA: Oh, is he? Wait. How did you get a date with Johnny Kuhn? He's like "jock city." I mean you're popular, but you're not *that* popular.

LATA: He, uh. . . asked me. Well, I've been doing his math homework for the last six months. It was take me to the prom or crack a book.

ASHA: I hate high school. It's so political. I'm going to post that up on MySpace. Everyone will know.

LATA: I'll post about that incident with you and Connor Hayes.

ASHA: I'll post that incident about the mascara in the chemistry lab.

LATA: There *is* no incident with the mascara in the chemistry lab.

ASHA: There will be when I'm done posting. **(Phone rings. It's a very loud classical piece.)**

LATA: What is that?

ASHA: **(loud)** It's my cell. New ring tone.

LATA: What?

ASHA: I said it's my cell!

LATA: Are you going to answer it?

ASHA: No, I like the music.

LATA: What?

ASHA: I said I like to hear the **(music stops immediately)** music.

LATA: Wow. Well who is it?

ASHA: Hmm. . . it's Johnny Kuhn. **(smart-alecky)** Wonder why he called? I better return this! **(SHE presses redial, LATA stares at RAJIV)**

RAJIV: Don't look at me!

LATA: If you ruin this prom for me I'll. . . I'll. . .

RAJIV: You better be careful young lady- or the incident with the mascara might just come true.

LATA: I don't like your code of ethics!

RAJIV: Well I don't like your pretentiousness.

LATA: **(escalating the argument)** And I don't like your blatant and willful abuse of power!

RAJIV: I don't like your prom dress!

LATA: **(stunned, annoyed, dismayed. . .)** Well, I don't like. . .

RAJIV: I guess I win that one. (**hands her the broom**) Here. Beats the one you rode over here on.

ASHA: (**ecstatic**) Oh, Johnny, thank you so much! You bet I'll be ready! (**hangs up with a big smile.**)

LATA: What?

ASHA: Johnny Kuhn said he'll take me to the prom.

LATA: You don't even have a dress. What are you going to wear. . . Fashion Bug clearance?

ASHA: I'll have a dress. (**to RAJIV**) Won't I? Rajiv. . . (**smiles**) I wish I had the most knockout prom dress ever!

RAJIV: Well, they have this cool sarong at the import store. My wife always wore a sarong. She looked fabulous! I used to ask "how can something sarong be so right!" (**HE laughs, but they're not amused.**) Uh. . . prom dress. . .

ASHA: Just make me look better than Lata. I don't want to get too power hungry with these wishes. Yet, anyway.

RAJIV: Fine. But first, help me clean up this mess. Or your mother won't let you go. I heard all that in the lamp.

ASHA: So, you pretty much know everything.

RAJIV: Oh, yeah.

LATA: Well, what am I supposed to do?

ASHA: I guess you're going to have to find someone to take you to the prom!

RAJIV: Don't worry. Everything will come out fine!

LATA: MySpace bulletin. Asha and the incident in the boys' locker room.

ASHA: There *is* no incident in the boys' locker room.

LATA: There is now. A big one.

SCENE 2

(At the prom; music in the background; be careful that music never overwhelms the actors. Given the nature of this play, Indian pop music would be a nice touch. Various students are milling around in formalwear, some "extras" can be on hand as well, either dancing or chatting. The more tasteless the prom dresses, the better. LATA is sitting in a chair disgusted. KUMAR, a "dorky" classmate, comes up to her and sits next to her, wearing a tux, but one that doesn't fit well. The stage can be decorated with prom banners, balloons, or other cheerful stuff, banners and signs mentioning the name of the producing school can add a nice touch as well. RAJIV can be very quietly in a corner, observing, or HE can appear later at ASHA's command.)

KUMAR: Lata, what's wrong? You look like you just had an incident.

LATA: (**very dismissive**) You're a dork, Kumar. Go away.

KUMAR: (**a bit snooty**) Well, you're not a dork, but yet I'm having the better time. Explain, if you please.

LATA: It's because you don't know when you should be humiliated. That tux, those glasses, that hair. You should be boxed away at a dog pound, yet you continue to appear in public.

KUMAR: (**subtly having fun at her expense**) But this is prom. I'm the dork and yet I'm sitting next to you. So, I wouldn't necessarily hypothesize about who should be humiliated and who shouldn't.

LATA: Go away, Kumar. Or no one will ask me to dance.

KUMAR: I will.

LATA: I was supposed to be here with Johnny Kuhn. And he's taking Asha.

KUMAR: I wonder why he's taking Asha.

LATA: Because she has a Genie and she wished for it.

KUMAR: Now, who's the dork?

SARAH: (**enters, or SHE's been hanging around, notices LATA and KUMAR together. SHE's woefully overdressed, one of the "in" crowd, even if SHE forced her way "in." If other girls are available, SHE can have an entourage.**) This is so cute! Lata and Kumar. Who'd have ever thought?

LATA: Sarah did you come to the prom to make fun of people or to dance?

SARAH: (**thinks briefly**) Well, both! Like mom says, do what you do well! In your case, it's sit around and mope.

LATA: This isn't funny.

SARAH: Not yet it's not. But I see a blog coming up as soon as prom is over. "Lata and the Dork."

KUMAR: Stop calling me a dork.

SARAH: Don't think of it as an insult – think of it as a definition.

ASHA: (**SHE and JOHNNY enter and SHE blurts out for everyone to hear and see**) Oh, I can't believe this. Johnny Kuhn is taking me to the prom.

JOHNNY: (**very unassuming; JOHNNY might be good on the playing field but HE doesn't have a lot of smarts**) You said you needed a way here.

ASHA: You are so sweet. And you look so nice. Look at Lata with that dork, Kumar.

JOHNNY: Ku-man's cool. He does my English homework. And in return, I keep the soccer team from hiding his clothes.

ASHA: Yuck! Why would they even. . .

JOHNNY: I don't know. (**confused**) They have this thing about Kumar's clothes.

ASHA: (**digging in, approaches LATA and KUMAR**) Hi, Lata! Are you having a good time?

LATA: (**pretends to look into a crystal ball**) I see incidents in your future.

ASHA: Well *incidentally*, look who took me to the prom!

SARAH: Johnny, your taste! What happened to it?

JOHNNY: Sarah, how nice to see you!

SARAH: And to think you could have asked me.

JOHNNY: (**seriously**) No, that was never an option.

ASHA: This is going to be the best prom ever!

JOHNNY: Well, you enjoy yourself. I have to go study for my math test.

ASHA: Johnny!

JOHNNY: Lata's been doing my homework all year, so if I don't study this weekend starting right now I'm going to flunk it.

ASHA: Johnny! It's prom night.

JOHNNY: I know. But the test is Monday.

ASHA: This is Saturday night! You have all day tomorrow.

JOHNNY: That's not much time to learn eight chapters.

ASHA: (**losing control**) But who am I going to dance with?

SARAH: Oh, that assumes you can dance!

ASHA: I can dance just fine.

SARAH: Good, then you can do a solo. (**takes out a cell phone**) I'll take pictures for my blog.

MRS: (**SARAH's mother, from whom SARAH got much of her training, enters. SHE's an adult chaperone at the prom, but desperately wants to be "one of the gang". At first SHE seems angry.**) Sarah! Are you making fun of people again?

SARAH: Mom!

MRS: (**insistent**) Are you?

SARAH: Of course I am. But no one that doesn't deserve it. (**to everyone else**) Never let your mother be a prom chaperone.

MRS: (**admonishing**) You know what I told you about making fun of people!

SARAH: (**embarrassed**) Yes, mother. (**reciting her lessons**) Do it behind their back first to gauge its effectiveness. Only tell the truth if it's damaging, and if so repeat, repeat, repeat. If it's a lie, attribute it to someone else. Find a weak spot; insert knife, and twist.

MRS: Exactly. *This* is not how you were raised to behave. (**military**) Now step it up! (**SHE steps back to watch**)

JOHNNY: Um, I'll see ya later. (**still very unassuming**) Hey, um. . . if you need me to pick you up, I can do that too.

ASHA: I only live two blocks from here.

JOHNNY: (**doesn't get it**) Well then, why did you need a ride? (**to LATA**) Hey, are you free tomorrow? Maybe you can help me study.

LATA: Johnny! Do you mean that?

JOHNNY: I think we'll need to spend all day together locked in a room.

LATA: Oh, Johnny!

JOHNNY: (*moves near LATA*) Hey, look, if "a" equals 46 and "b" equals 15, and "c"-

ASHA: (*pushes him away*) Johnny, go home!

LATA: (*romantic, as much to ASHA as JOHNNY*) See you tomorrow, Johnny! (*JOHNNY exits*)

ASHA: (*claps her hands*) Rajiv!

RAJIV: (*enters, or approaches her, and bows*) At your service, dear.

ASHA: Don't you "dear" me, you idiot.

RAJIV: I'd be careful who you call an idiot, Little Miss Muffet.

SARAH: Ha! Good one. (*SHE takes out a pad of paper to write it down*)

ASHA: He left. He went home. He left me standing here looking like a-

SARAH: Oh, I am so going to blog!

MRS: (*comes in closer again*) Let me read it first. I want to make sure you show no mercy!

SARAH: (*explaining*) Mom and I use *Mean Girls* as a learning tool.

ASHA: (*to RAJIV, commanding*) Bring him back to me right now!

RAJIV: And have him flunk math? Look, you said you wanted someone to take you to the prom.

ASHA: He was supposed to stay and dance with me.

RAJIV: I fulfilled your desire, did I not, mistress?

ASHA: "Take" means "spend the evening with."

RAJIV: So when your mother says, "Asha, take out the garbage," she means, "Asha, spend the evening in the dumpster."

ASHA: Fine. I wish Johnny Kuhn would flunk his math test.

RAJIV: He probably will anyway. But that's not a very nice wish. I don't know if I can let you get away with that.

ASHA: (*assertive, and a bit bratty*) It's what I want.

RAJIV: It's selfish and spiteful and you won't learn anything from it.

ASHA: I think you make up the rules as you go along.

RAJIV: (*agrees*) More or less, yes.

ASHA: Fine, then I wish. . . (*gets a great idea!*) I could help Johnny study for his test.

LATA: You don't know math.

ASHA: I think I do. (*show-offy, twirls around like a ballerina*) Y equals MX plus. . . (*in LATA's face, with a flourish*) me!

SARAH: (*barges in between everyone*) Wait a minute, wait a minute. . . you have a genie?

ASHA: What of it? Someone smuggled him in from India on a Pier One shipment.

MRS: So, he's an illegal immigrant on your family's payroll. I'm starting to smell jail time for a culturally inconsiderate young girl, **(perks up)** along with an *international* incident.

(LATA and SARAH jump up and down at the thought of this!)

ASHA: He gives me what I want. If he feels like it. **(assesses her situation)** And he's not doing a very good job of it.

MRS: **(goes to get RAJIV)** Can we borrow him? I'm brewing up some vengeance on my husband's sister, and I could use some help.

ASHA: **(pulls him back)** He's *my* genie. **(to RAJIV)** Even though you've humiliated me.

KUMAR: **(gets up; it's hard for him to speak up)** I'll dance with you, Asha.

ASHA: Now I'm *really* humiliated.

SARAH: Wait till I'm finished blogging. It'll be humiliation re-defined. I'll have hits like nobody's business!

KUMAR: Please? No one will dance with me!

MRS: I will! **(SHE gets a big ugly smile on her face)**

KUMAR: **(takes a look at MRS and turns back to ASHA)** Pretty please?

LATA: Go ahead, Asha. How much worse can this evening get?

ASHA: Kumar can you even dance? **(thinks it over)** I don't even care about dancing. I just wanted to be seen with the coolest guy in the school. A teen girl's self esteem is inextricably bound up in what boy does or doesn't like her. And her weight. Feminism my chapatti.

RAJIV: That's a shame. And don't knock chapattis.

SARAH: It's a shame, but it's the truth. But rather no boy than a dork boy.

ASHA: Well, I can do something about that. **(to RAJIV)** I wish that Kumar wasn't such a dork.

RAJIV: What if Kumar likes being a dork! You're interfering in his life.

ASHA: This is about me. To save my reputation. Don't you understand anything about high school?

RAJIV: Well, okay. **(goes to KUMAR and raps him on the head, unenthusiastically)** Till midnight, you're not a dork.

KUMAR: Why just till midnight? Why not-

RAJIV: When's your curfew?

KUMAR: It's prom night.

RAJIV: And your parents want you home by 12:30. Don't they, Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater?

KUMAR: **(trying to hide it)** Don't let anyone know that.

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