

GELITECH

- SIDES -

EPISODE 5
IN A BOTTLE

BY SHETIRA ANWAE

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IN A BOTTLE

It *seemed* innocent enough. It was just a weird looking bottle. Wasn't it?

Denya held the large crystal flask aloft and admired its strange, almost otherworldly beauty. Its countless crisp, clear facets glimmered in the morning sunlight, casting bright, colorful little rays all over her little one room apartment. These little scales formed a perfectly regular pattern that spiraled up around the whole of the flask's surface, broken only by a bubbly, fluid stream of vivid pink. This eye-catching splash of color formed a pool around the flask's base, rising up in fluid threads around it's voluptuously curved sides and long, slender neck, before forming a smooth roll around its mouth.

The mouth of the flask was closed by a tall, oval plug of vivid pink crystal. This fit so well that it made a perfect seal. No matter how much the cougaress turned the flask about, it didn't wobble, rattle, or come loose. It would have been the perfect container to hold a bottle's worth of wine to share among guests, if she'd been the sort to drink wine. Or had any room for guests.

Denya looked back at the package in which the flask had come. It was a fancy faux-wood box, matte black and held together with a lovely pink, postal service approved, gift-parcel ribbon. There was no return address. Nor was there much to indicate that it had even been sent to the right place.

The cougaress carefully rechecked the shipping label. It was her address, all right. But, instead of a name, it simply read "Current Resident". If it had been a piece of junk mail, or an inexpensive sample from some local business trying to attract new customers, that would have made perfect

sense. This was anything but that. It was something special. Something expensive. A gift, and almost certainly not a random one.

But... if the flask hadn't been sent out at random, then why had she been picked to receive one? And where had it come from? Who had sent it? It was a puzzle, for sure, and it was one that had been occupying her mind all morning.

There was only one, impossibly vague hint. It was found on a piece of yellowed, old-timey style paper that had been carefully clued to the underside of the lid. "A very special gift, very specially ordered, for a very special fey'li. ~ Your most thoroughly enthralled paramour," Denya read the faux-calligraphy script aloud, shaking her head at the thought that anyone could be so thoroughly enthralled with a grouchy night shift nurse, let alone enough to send such a seemingly expensive gift.

Granted, the modestly attractive, middle-aged cougaress was always encountering patients who'd expressed more than just a passing interest in her fuzzy fey'li tail. It was hard to imagine anyone being attracted to her blunt, scowly demeanor. Then again, it was Macharri. The vets were used to taking orders from cats with attitude. Maybe she was inadvertently providing them some sort of comfortable familiarity. Or maybe they were just too buzzed on medications to notice how much of an ass she could be, despite the enticing roundness of her rump.

The hint, if it could really be called that, was accompanied by an equally puzzling riddle of sorts. "The Genie's Bottle," the cougaress murmured as she continued on to the next part of the label. "This carefully hand crafted bottle has been specially enhanced to hold and preserve even the most magical of liquid spirits. The rest is up to you. Will it contain the liquid spirit of some other beauty? Or... will it contain your own?"

That... that just sounds silly, Denya thought to herself as she wondered just what sort of potent liquor had inspired such a fantastical description of the flask's most likely intended use. Assuming that it's most likely intended use was to hold alcoholic beverages, of course. That's what liquid spirits meant, wasn't it?

Now... what to do with it, she thought as she placed the flask down on the little smoky glass dining table, next to the box it had come in. Where to place the lovely flask was as much of a puzzle as it's origin. Her plain apartment, with its sterile white surfaces and dark wooden furniture was hardly the kind of place for the display of fancy baubles. *I could put it on the shelf over there. In place of the picture frame. But... it's so much fancier than anything else I have. It'll look so out of place.*

Denya began to run her finger over the top of the flask's smooth, round plug as she contemplated what to do with it. It felt quite solidly gripped in

the flask's mouth, at least at first. After a few moments, however, it began to wobble. Without really thinking about it, she began to rock the plug back and forth. After a few moments of that, she started to move it around in a circle. Slowly, bit by bit, it began to work its way out. A faint, jasmine scent wafted into her nose.

"Oh! That smells nice," Denya said, holding the plug canted to one side and taking in the pleasant scent. It wasn't the sort of thing one would expect from a container intended to hold drinkable liquid. Perhaps this flask was intended for some other purpose. Perfume? Or maybe scented oil?

Oh! Maybe it already has something in it, the curious cougaress thought as she plucked the loosened plug from the flask's mouth. It hadn't before occurred to her that the flask might already be filled with some sort of clear liquid. But what sort of liquid could it be? *Let's see...*

A wave of intense jasmine surrounded Denya as she looked down into the open flask. Within the flask's faceted walls, the sunlight glittered and danced about in a mesmerizing tangle of rays, sparkles, and... an intangible *something*. Something ethereal. Something luminous. Something potent. Something...

Oh! What... the befuddled cougaress thought as it seemed to her eyes that the *something* was flowing out of the bottle, even though it was held perfectly upright. It seemed to defy comprehension, a vision like oil upon water, but in the air itself. A slowly billowing cloud, bending light and breaking it into colors that cast a rainbow filter over the table, the box, the flask, and the hand with which she held it. *What... the...*

Denya had no time to react. In but a few short moments, the cloud flowed over her chest before spreading outward to surround her whole body in colorful jasmine *something*. Her form fitting blue top and black shorts were no impediment to its

spread. It flowed into, around, and under the fabric. Before she knew it, she was completely surrounded in the stuff from head to toe.

"Uh..." the cougaress gasped, more confused than alarmed. Portable, field projection containers designed to automatically apply full body coatings of things like disinfectants, hazardous chemical neutralizers, and the like were nothing new. They had them at the hospital. But for perfume? That was something new to her. Not that she minded. It was quite a wonderful scent, after all.

Denya moved to put the plug back into the flask, but stopped short as a strange, cool tingle washed over the whole of her body. She started to feel numb. The plug dropped onto the table as her whole body began to feel weak. Limp. Almost... liquid.

The room began to whirl about in a dizzying spiral that seemed to defy the laws of physics. She was spinning. Spinning quickly. Around and

around and around and up and around and then down. She felt smaller, and smaller, and smaller. A firm squeeze. A settling in some confined space. Staring up at the ceiling. Eyes filled with sparkles. A pink shape descending. The world closed away with a sharp 'thunk'. And then...

What... what... the... fuck!?! Denya thought as her view of the world devolved into a cacophony of rainbow sparkles flashing amid fluid threads of pink luminescence. What... what just happened?

Impossible sensations did their best to make the astonished cougaress question reality. She could hear only twinkly chimes, which seemed to rise and fall with the all encompassing sparkles. She could smell only jasmine. She could taste only a subtly, fruity flavor, like cherries, but smoother and less distinct. Her body itself felt like a dull, distant nothing. Or was it a something? There was a coolness. A roundness. A strange uniformity of substance.

Oh... oh goddess! I'm... I'm in the bottle! Denya thought as she struggled to maintain some degree of mental focus. *I'm the liquid spirit! What the... how? How it even possible? It can't be! I can't be... I... I... can I?*

The bottled genie struggled to comprehend her new physical state, even as she began to fade into a dreamy world of dancing light pixies, singing their strange songs as she bathed in a warm, jasmine scented bath, surrounded by trays and trays of delectable fruit. Nothing seemed to matter any more. Nothing but the soft, involuntarily euphoric feeling that saturated the whole of her whirling mind and formless body.

It was wonderful. Beyond wonderful, really. Every moment existed as it was, unfettered by memories of past moments, or anticipation of future moments. The vision, the smells, the scents, were as fresh and intense in the current moment as they were in the first. There was no need to think.

No need to ponder. No need to do anything but steep in the glorious, unending *now*.

It was impossible for the genie to know how much time had passed, for time didn't pass at all for her. Her dream just was. Until the moment that it wasn't.

All at once, the genie's world began to whirl about in a madness of blinding rainbow light. Her formless form began to take a more definite shape. A much larger shape, and one that felt vaguely familiar, in a distant, dreamy sort of way.

The genie stood in glistening, transparent, faceless humanoid gloriousness as her summoner reached out to run an affectionate hand over her oily smooth shoulder. Another hand gestured toward a nearby surface. A soft looking surface upon which she could comfortably lay and receive whatever blessings her new master might be pleased to give her.

The genie wasn't compelled to do as her new master pleased. She just didn't have any reason not to. Her mind was empty, completely cleansed of everything relating to her former life. Bereft of any form of willpower, anything her new master desired was as desirable to her as it was to him.

The genie's master again gestured toward the bed he desired her to occupy. She obeyed.

...

"I don't think she remembered signing up for the project, do you?" Dr. K'trie remarked as the scanner began to make its way down the examination table.

"I don't think she even read the form explaining what she was signing up for, to be honest," Dr. Miyar commented as her research partner watched

the image being formed on the monitor. "But she doesn't seem to mind it, does she?"

"I don't think she can at this point," Dr. K'trie responded with a shrug as he watched the data come in. "Eh. It's all good. The more we can learn about these 'genies', and the quicker, the better. Intel is all worried that they're intended for use as some kind of bedroom infiltrators, but for the life of me, I can't imagine how."

"Intel and their imaginations," Dr. Miyar sighed. "Do you remember the time they tried to claim that Drochaki hives were brainwashing facilities to create an army of compliant soldiers to conquer the Empire? More like an army of honey addicts."

Dr. K'trie chuckled. "That was a good one."

"Ah well," Dr. Miyar said with a smirk. "Let's hope we can learn something from this thing, at least. It's quite a unique transformation. Those

Aveyka carries always come up with the strangest and most fascinating things. It's such a shame the fancy crystal-tech bottles are so expensive though. I don't think we can justify a second one in the budget. Maybe we shouldn't have let them send it directly to her as a surprise gift."

"A lab setting might have affected her resulting mental state," Dr. K'trie responded, "Besides, if we get good data from this, we'll have a good chance of getting all the credits we need to buy more."

"I certainly hope so," Dr. Miyar replied. "I really would enjoy watching the transformation in person."

"That makes two of us," Dr. K'trie said with a smile. "Now... assuming she's not found to be dangerous in this form, what are we doing with her once we're done with the examination?"

"She didn't specify," Dr. Miyar said, looking over her consent forms again. "So that means the

default option. No specific preferences for the sex of the receiver. Research team's discretion."

"Well then," Dr. K'trie responded with a chuckle. "Toss a coin for her?"

Dr. Miyar shook her head and laughed. "Seriously? Alright then. A coin toss it is. Loser gets the next one, though. Got it? Fair's fair."

Dr. K'trie nodded as he watched the scanner begin its second pass over the prostrate genie with a grin. "Agreed. Now, lets start getting the hormono-pheromono emission test prepped. I want to get that settled before lunch. The cafeteria is serving hampai tacos until thirteen hundred today and I really don't want to miss them!"

CREATING

*ANOTHER EPISODE
COMING NEXT MONTH...*