

# A Dozen of Everything

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

When Marcie unwrapped the cut-glass bottle, she thought it was perfume. "Oh, fine," she said to herself sardonically. "Here I am, being married in four days, and without a rag to wear, and Aunt Hepsibah sends me perfume!"

It wasn't that Marcie was mercenary. But Aunt Hepsibah was, as the vulgar expression puts it, rolling in dough; and she spent about forty dollars a year. She lived in Egypt, in a little mud hut, because, as she said, she wanted to Soak Up the Flavor of the East . . . in large capitals. She wrote Marcie, who was her only living relative, long incoherent letters about the Beauty of the Orient, and the Delights of Contemplation; letters which Marcie dutifully read and as dutifully answered with "Dear Aunt Hepsibah; I hope you are well . . ."

She sighed, and examined the label. Printed in a careful, vague Arabic script, it read "Djinn Number Seven." Marcie shrugged.

Oh well, she thought, it's probably very chi-chi and expensive. If I go without lunch this week, I can manage to get myself a fancy negligee, and maybe a pair of new gloves to wear to the church. Greg will like the perfume,

and if I keep my job for a few months after we're married, we'll get along. Of course, Emily Post says that a bride should have a dozen of everything, but we can't *all* be lucky.

She started to put the perfume into her desk drawer—for her lunch hour was almost over—then, on an impulse, she began carefully to work the stopper loose. "I'll just take a tiny sniff—" she thought . . .

The stopper stuck; Marcie twitched, pulled—choked at the curious, pervasive fragrance which stole out. "It sure is strong—" she thought, holding the loosened stopper in her hand . . . then she blinked and dropped it to the floor, where the precious cut-glass shattered into a million pieces.

Marcie was a normal child of her generation, which is to say, she went to the movies regularly. She had seen *Sinbad the Sailor*, and *The Thief of Bagdad*, so, of course, she knew immediately what was happening, as the pervasive fragrance rolled out and coalesced into a huge, towering figure with a vaguely oriental face. "My gosh . . ." she breathed, then, as she noticed imminent peril to the office ceiling, directed "Hey, stick your head out the window—quick!"

"To hear is to obey," said the huge figure sibilantly, "but, O mistress, if I might venture to make a suggestion, that might attract attention. Permit me—" and he promptly shrank to a less generous proportion, "They don't make palaces as big these days, do they?" he asked confidentially.

"They certainly do not," gulped Marcie. "Are you—are you a genie?"

"I am not," the figure said with asperity. "Can't you read? I am a djinn—Djinn Number Seven to be exact."

"Er—you mean you have to grant me my wish?"

The djinn scowled. "Now, there is a strange point of ethics," he murmured. "Since the stopper on the bottle is broken, I can't ever be shut up again. At the same time,

since you so generously let me out, I shall gladly grant you one wish. What will it be?"

Marcie didn't even hesitate. Here was a chance to make a good wedding present out of Aunt Hepsibah's nutty old bottle, and after all, she wasn't a greedy girl. She smiled brilliantly. "I'm being married in a few days—" she started.

"You want an elixir of love? Of eternal beauty?"

"No, sir-eee!" Marcie shuddered, she had read the *Arabian Nights* when she was a little girl; she knew you could not make a magical bargain with a genie—er—djinn. "No, as a matter of fact, I just want—well, a household trousseau. Nice things to be married in, and that kind of thing—just to start us off nicely."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand." The djinn frowned. "Trousseau? That word has come in since my time. Remember, I haven't been out of this bottle since King Solomon was in diapers."

"Well—sheets, and towels, and slips, and night-gowns—" Marcie began, then dismissed it. "Oh well, just give me a dozen of everything," she told him.

"To hear is to obey," the djinn intoned. "Where shall I put it, O mistress?"

"Oh, in my room," Marcie told him, then, remembering the five-dollar-a-week hall bedroom, "Maybe you'll have to enlarge the room a little, but you can do that, can't you?"

"Oh, sure," said the djinn casually. "A djinn, my dear mistress, can do anything. And now, farewell forever, and thank you for letting me out."

He vanished so swiftly that Marcie rubbed her eyes, and the little cut-glass bottle fell to the floor. After a moment, Marcie picked it up, sniffing at the empty bottle. A curious faint fragrance still clung to it, but it was otherwise empty.

"Did I dream this whole thing?" she asked herself dizzily.

The buzzer rang, and the other typists in the office came back to their desks. "Gosh," someone asked, "have you been sitting here all during lunch hour, Marcie?"

"I—I took a little nap—" Marcie answered, and carefully palmed the cut-glass bottle into her desk drawer.

That afternoon seemed incredibly long to Marcie. The hands of the clock lagged as they inched around the dial, and she found herself beginning one business letter "Dear Djinn—" She ripped it out angrily, typed the date on a second letterhead, and started over; "Djinntlemen; we wish to call your attention—"

Finally, the hands reached five, and Marcie, whisking a cover over her typewriter, clutched her handbag and literally ran from the office. "There won't be anything there—" she kept telling herself, as she walked rapidly down the block, "there won't be anything—but suppose there was, suppose . . ."

The hall of the rooming-house was ominously quiet. Marcie ascended the stairs, wondering at the absence of the landlady, the lack of noise from the other boarders. A curious reluctance dragged at her hands as she thrust her key into the lock.

"It's all nonsense," she said aloud. "Here goes—"

She shut her eyes and opened the door. She walked in . . .

There was a dozen of everything. The room extended into gray space, and Marcie, opening her eyes, caught her hands to her throat to stifle a scream. There were a dozen of her familiar bed; a dozen gray cats snoozing on the pillow; a dozen dainty negligees, piled carefully by it; a dozen delicate packages labelled "Nylon stockings," and a dozen red apples rolling slightly beside them. Before her staring eyes a dozen elephants lumbered through the gray space, and beyond, her terrified vision focused on a dozen white domes that faded into the

dim spaces of the expanded room, and a dozen tall cathedrals as well.

A dozen of *everything* . . .

“Marcie—Marcie, where are you?” she heard a man’s voice shouting from the hall. Marcie whirled. *Greg!* And he was *outside*—outside this nightmare! She fled blindly, stumbling over a dozen rolled-up Persian carpets, grazing the edge of one of a dozen grand pianos; she screamed, visualizing a dozen rattlesnakes somewhere . . .

“Greg!” she shrieked.

Twelve doors were flung violently open.

“Marcie, sweetheart, what’s the matter?” pleaded a jumble of tender voices, and twelve of Greg, pushing angrily at one another, rushed into the room.