

THREE THOUSAND YEARS
OF
LONGING

Screenplay

by

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BLACK SCREEN...

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)

*My name is Alithea. My story is true.
You're more likely to believe me, however,
if I tell it as a fairy tale.*

HIGH IN THE CLOUDS...

A common PASSENGER JET advances into frame - close above us, its nose, belly and wings overwhelm.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA

*So...Once upon a time, when humans
hurtled across the sky on metal wings...*

INSIDE THE PLANE

As we creep along the aisle, an oceanographic documentary screens on the in-flight entertainment.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA

*...When they wore webbed feet
and walked on the bottom of the sea...*

Further along, a passenger - wearing earbuds - is scrolling through a playlist on his smart phone.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA

*When they held, in their hands, glass tiles
that could coax love songs from the air...*

We settle on ALITHEA BINNIE.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA

...There was a woman, adequately happy and alone.

She has the concave posture of a constant reader.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA

...Alone, by choice.

A book is reflected in the lenses of her glasses. Her EYES dart briskly, utterly focused...

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA

*...Happy, because she was independent
living off the exercise of her scholarly mind.*

She is reading with startling rapidity, running her thumb down the margins of each page for little more than a second before flicking to the next. Her leg jiggling all the while.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*Her business was Story.
 She was a narratologist,
 who sought to find the truths common to
 all the stories of humankind.*

Oblivious to the GLANCES of the PASSENGERS around her, she finishes the book.

There are two more waiting to be read.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*To this end, once or twice a year,
 she ventured to strange lands - to China, the South Seas
 and the timeless cities of the Levant...*

Through the clouds, the **MINARETS OF ISTANBUL** glisten below.

The aircraft's UNDERCARRIAGE opens.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
...Where her kind gathered to tell stories about stories.

The WHEELS approach the **TARMAC** and...

SLAM!

CUT TO the WOBBLY, SQUEALING WHEEL of a BAGGAGE CART.

ALITHEA BINNIE pushes it, making her way through the crowd at...

ISTANBUL AIRPORT

A HEAVY HAND brushes hers aside, rudely grabbing the handle of the cart.

She looks up to see an UNSETTLING MAN, small and bald in a voluminous sheepskin jacket.

He FORCES HER CART in an unwanted direction.

UNSETTLING MAN
 This way.

ALITHEA
 Excuse me.

UNSETTLING MAN
 This way, lady.

She tries to steer it back.

ALITHEA
 What are you doing? Can you let go please.

He looks AT HER DIRECTLY with pale, cold eyes!

UNSETTLING MAN
 (insistent)
 The mysteries of Istanbul.

For a moment, his skin seems to be VAPOROUS and a few FLECKS of FINE ASH float around him.

Then...

GÜNHAN RIFAT
 (off screen)
 ALITHEA! ALITHEA!!

She and the Unsettling Man look across the crowd to...

The IMPOSING FIGURE of Professor GÜNHAN RIFAT (40's, exuberant) making his way towards them.

When she turns back, THE MAN has SLUNK into the CROWD...

OTHER WORLDLY, he shimmers - like A MIRAGE. Then, HE IS GONE.

GÜNHAN RIFAT
 Welcome. Welcome, at last.
 My dear friend.

ALITHEA
 Günhan!

GÜNHAN embraces her generously.

As she is introduced to the GREETING PARTY, ALITHEA REMAINS DISTRACTED while listening to the small-talk...

... '*This is Amina'* ... '*from the British Council'*

The DRIVER steps forward to take the baggage, but...

Alithea Binnie INSISTS on pushing her own cart towards the carpark.

LATER. TRAVELLING IN THE CAR...

ALITHEA watches the street life of Istanbul from the front seat, but she is preoccupied...

ALITHEA
 That fellow at the airport, manhandling my luggage.
 Did you see him?

GÜNHAN
 What fellow?

ALITHEA
 He scuttled off when you arrived.
 Small. Sheepskin Jacket. Pink Collar.

The OTHERS shake their heads.

GÜNHAN
Interesting.

ALITHEA
He was hot to touch.
Musky.

GÜNHAN
(casually)
Perhaps he was a Djinn?

SEMIH THE DRIVER
An illegal taxi driver, more likely.

BRITISH COUNCIL LADY
Wearing too much cologne.

They are enjoying themselves.

ALITHEA continues her line of inquiry.

ALITHEA
So, Professor, you're saying you believe in Djinn?

GÜNHAN
I believe there are those who need to believe in them.

ALITHEA
Including me?

GÜNHAN
...Djinn, ghosts. Aliens.
Whatever helps.

Everyone chuckles, except...

ALITHEA, who remains UNSETTLED.

A bird's-eye view of...

THE GRAND PERA PALAS HOTEL

Distinctly Belle Époque.

A Bell Boy and the GREETING PARTY guide ALITHEA to her room...

... '*The hotel has arranged a lovely surprise for you*'.

THE DOOR TO ROOM 333 IS OPENED

GÜNHAN
It's the Agatha Christie Room.
In this room she wrote 'Murder on the Orient Express'.

ALITHEA is ushered in... It is charmingly appointed and lined with books.

A PORTER...

Lifts her suitcases onto the rack. The bag tags are ripped off.

ALITHEA latches the door shut. CLACK!

Finally, a moment of solitude and reflection...to let go of the strange presence that unsettled her at the airport.

THE CHAPEL OF HAGIA IRENE, TOPKAPI PALACE

This is where the symposium is being held.

It is packed with Narratologists from all over the globe.

They LAUGH in response to Professor GÜNHAN's joviality, as he continues with his address...

GÜNHAN

So...how would you explain the power of a thunderstorm,
if you don't have the means
to measure and model meteorological data?

ALITHEA is seated on a swivel chair, on one side of the stage.

On the other side, GÜNHAN is controlling the PowerPoint.

GÜNHAN

How can you explain the seasons -
Autumn through Winter to Spring and Summer...

GÜNHAN clicks the remote. On one of the large screens behind him, we see an ANIMATION of the EARTH'S PATH around the SUN - its light favouring one hemisphere over the other.

GÜNHAN

...if you don't know that the earth orbits the sun
while tilted on an axis?

The CONSEQUENCES of this are seen in IMAGES of the seasons.

GÜNHAN

Everything was mystery.

The Seasons. Tsunamis. Microbial disease.
What else could we do, but resort to stories?
(gesturing to Alithea)

As Dr Binnie has encouraged us to understand,
stories were once the only way
to make our bewildering existence coherent.

ALITHEA

That's exactly right.

ALITHEA turns to address the AUDIENCE...

ALITHEA
We gave name to the unknown forces behind
all wonders and catastrophe
by telling each other...

As she speaks, the CAMERA GLIDES across the back of her head...from one side to the other...and we reveal...

A PALE PRESENCE on the BALCONY above the crowd.

ALITHEA
By telling each other stories...

Does anyone else notice the eerie, elongated FIGURE?

She closes her eyes. When she opens them...

It is GONE.

NO IT'S NOT!

It's on the OTHER SIDE of the auditorium. SITTING several rows back in the CROWD.

We hold ALITHEA'S face while, in the background, GÜNHAN continues...

GÜNHAN
Let me show you.

With this, he clicks the screen...

The PLANETARY ANIMATION is replaced by GODDESSES of the SEASONS and HARVEST...

GÜNHAN
We told tales of specific, powerful, relatable Gods.
Ever-present, in all cultures, in all mythologies.

We see the Greek PERSEPHONE, The Norse FREYA and their kind.

GÜNHAN
From the Greeks, to the Romans,
to the Norse and so on.

ALITHEA cannot look away from the PALE PRESENCE.

She chances a look at GÜNHAN to see if he can see it too. When she looks back...

It is sitting in the ROW directly IN FRONT OF HER!

Everyone else is looking at the SCREENS, where images of the MANY GODS are arranged into complex FAMILY TREES.

GÜNHAN
The familiar descendants of Zeus,
Poseidon, Athena, Thor, the whole gang -
find expression even today.

The GENEALOGIES of the Greek and Norse Gods EVOLVE into...

The present-day MARVEL and DC SUPERHEROES.

GÜNHAN
These are their vestiges.

Fascinated by the PALE PRESENCE, ALITHEA speaks as if directly to it.

ALITHEA
The question remains - what is their purpose?

Unnoticed by anyone else, the PRESENCE gets slowly to its feet.

ALITHEA mirrors its action. Standing. Meeting its gaze.

ALITHEA
What do we require of them now?

It's as if she is waiting for an answer.

Puzzled by ALITHEA'S odd behaviour, GÜNHAN tries to prompt her...

GÜNHAN
There is Mythos and there is Science...

She remains distracted.

ALITHEA
Mythology is what we knew back then.
Science is what we know so far.
Sooner or later, our creation stories are replaced
by the narratives of science. Painstaking science.
And all Gods and Monsters
outlive their original purpose -
and are reduced to metaphor.

LOUD UNSETTLING VOICE
RUBBISH!!!

ALITHEA looks to the AUDIENCE.

No one else - including GÜNHAN - seems to have heard it.

Yet, out of the MASS of FACES...

The PALE PRESENCE RUSHES FORWARD with a SILENT ROAR!

Its CAVERNOUS, TOOTHLESS MAW emitting a dark vapour.

Squid-inking the SCREEN to...

BLACK

For a long moment, there is no sound.

Then, the murmur of the crowd...

VARIOUS VOICES
 (spoken in Turkish, subtitled in English)
...She fainted!
...Why?...
I don't know...She just fell!

And - as if emerging from underwater - the voice of Günhan calling her name.

CLOSE on ALITHEA'S FACE from a bizarre angle. Her eyes roll into place and find focus. Now she realises...

She is flat on her back on the floor.

Nearby, her chair lies fallen.

Despite Günhan's protests, she gets to her feet.

GÜNHAN
 Are you okay?

As he ushers her off stage, she gives a 'thumbs up' - indicating she's okay.

The AUDIENCE begins a relieved APPLAUSE.

CUT TO...

The CLAP-CLAP-CLAP of a WOODEN RATTLE, twirled by a street vendor in...

THE AVENUE OUTSIDE TOPKAPI PALACE

Where ALITHEA is walking briskly - as if away from something.

GÜNHAN hurries to catch up.

GÜNHAN
 Shouldn't you see a doctor?

ALITHEA
 Why? When I feel so well?

GÜNHAN
 Forgive me, Alithea, are you sure?

ALITHEA
 Apart from the usual aches and pains,
 there is nothing untoward. Nothing to make a fuss.

She marches forward.

GÜNHAN
 So what happened back there?

She stops, owing him a proper answer.

ALITHEA
 Lately, my imagination's been getting the better of me.
 Ambushing me.

GÜNHAN needs more.

ALITHEA
I think it's a warning.

GÜNHAN
About what?

ALITHEA
Not to be complacent. To keep on my toes.
It manifests, rudely, from time to time.
I try not to fight it off. It takes charge for a moment,
then it steps back.

GÜNHAN
What steps back?

ALITHEA
Oh, Günhan, it's irrational.
Pay it no mind.

She strides on.

Again, GÜNHAN hurries after her - concerned.

GÜNHAN
You are behaving like a child,
you know that?

ALITHEA
You know, I am actually a child?

LATER. THE VASTNESS OF THE GRAND BAZAAR

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
If there is fate, can we escape it? Who can say?
But I tell you this...
In the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul
there are 62 streets and 4000 shops.

Tracking shots of an endless variety of shop fronts.

Each of them overabundant with wares.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
And in one of those shops there are three rooms.
In the smallest of those rooms there was a pile
of things unsorted, old and new.

We find our way there.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
From the bottom of that pile, I chose a memento.

It is a SMALL GLASS BOTTLE...

She holds it in her hand, wipes away the dust. Half of it is a whirl of blue-white stripes and the other half malformed, as if melted.

She finds the YOUNG SHOPKEEPER at the counter.

ALITHEA
Do you know what this is?

He takes THE BOTTLE from her and tries to improve its appearance. He gives the GLASS STOPPER an experimental twist, but it does not budge.

YOUNG SHOPKEEPER
I'm not sure. But it could be Cesm-i Bulbul - a 'Nightingale's Eye'.
Around 1845, there were these glassmakers in Incirkoy,
they were famous for this spiral blue white pattern.

GÜNHAN steps in.

GÜNHAN
Please, it's a gift from me.
Choose something less forlorn.

ALITHEA
And if this is Cesm-i Bulbul,
is there a way of authenticating it?

The Young Shopkeeper holds the bottle up to the light.

YOUNG SHOPKEEPER
They say - if it's genuine - sometimes you can see specks of blood from the lungs of the glassblowers.

He hands it back to Alithea.

YOUNG SHOPKEEPER
But this is more likely a recent imitation.

GÜNHAN is offering more expensive gifts.

GÜNHAN
It's been damaged by fire.
Pick something else.

ALITHEA
No, thank you, Günhan. I like it.
Whatever it is, I'm sure it has an interesting story.

She places it on the counter for the Young Shopkeeper to wrap.

FADE TO BLACK

The bird's-eye view of...

THE GRAND PERA PALAS HOTEL

TIME LAPSE from pre-dawn to early morning.

IN HER BATHROOM

ALITHEA'S GLASSES sit - fogged - on the vanity.

She picks them up, loops the lanyard over her head, swathes her wet hair in a towel and pootles into the...

BEDROOM

Where she answers the phone.

ALITHEA

Hello. Good morning.

(confirming her order)

...Yes...Runny please...yes but no crusts.

No. Just one. Thank you.

As she speaks, ALITHEA gazes at the small PACKAGE containing the CESM-I BULBUL BOTTLE.

She picks it up and unwraps it, as she heads back into the...

BATHROOM

She sets the tissue paper aside and runs THE BOTTLE under the tap. She rubs away at the grimy surface, revealing more of its cobalt blue and white pattern.

With her thumbs and fingers, she massages the clay-encrusted stopper. But it won't come loose.

Now she goes at it with her ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH.

The VIBRATIONS intensify and...from within...

FFOOOOSH!

THE CESM-I BULBUL LEAPS FROM HER HAND like a frog.

The stopper falls, tinkling but unbroken into the basin.

THEN...from its mouth...

A thermal blast which ignites the tissue paper in which it was wrapped.

This is followed by a WISP...an EMANATION...a prodigious FLOW from the BOTTLE. It billows CRIMSON, BLUE, GREY and BLACK as it surges into the BEDROOM.

ALITHEA is taken aback.

Her glasses fall off her face and hang from the lanyard around her neck.

The bathroom is cast in shadow as an ENORMOUS FOOT (out of focus) blocks the doorway!

She is puzzled. Apprehensive. Trying to process what's before her...

FIVE GREAT TOES, a throbbing vein inside an ANKLE of EBONY SHEENED SKIN. Unstable, vaporous.

After a moment, she steps forward and reaches out to touch the FOOT. But it SWELLS and RETRACTS, with a sucking sound, into the bedroom, from where is heard a THRUMMING MURMUR. Deep. Musical. An incantation of gratitude, or expletive, perhaps.

ALITHEA follows the foot into...

THE BEDROOM...

Where she sees the rest of THE DJINN.

A hulking, inevitable presence. BLUE-BLACK, like a moonlit night.

ALITHEA

I'm going to close my eyes and count to three.
After which, I would be grateful if you were gone.

She closes her EYES.

ALITHEA
One...Two...Three.

When she opens them...

She is clearly unsatisfied.

So, she closes them again. Willing him away...

ALITHEA
Four. Five. Six...Seven Eight Nine Ten!

When her EYES OPEN once more...

HE IS STILL THERE.

SILHOUETTED and OUT OF FOCUS, his DARK FIGURE is CRAMMED into the room, curled around himself like a snake. His huge head and shoulders pushing against the ceiling.

ALITHEA puts on her glasses to examine the SKIN OF HIS BACK. Polychromatic. Like satin.

She cannot see his face. He is TURNED AWAY from her - murmuring in an unknown language (this is Djinnbish)

ALITHEA
I don't suppose you speak English?

No response.

ALITHEA
Deutsch? Español? Elleniká?

THE DJINN turns one of his long, elegantly shaped ears to listen.

THE DJINN
(Spoken in Ancient Greek, subtitled in English)
You speak the Greek of Homer?

His voice does not conform to the expected acoustics of the room. It is, at once, a whisper and a bellow.

What else can ALITHEA do, but respond?

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
I took some classes at university.

THE DJINN's form seems to be fluctuating - coming more into proportion.

(Parts of him are covered in finely woven pearlescent scales melded with intricate bird-of-paradise feathers.)

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
Please - do not fear me, nor treat me casually.
I am beholden to you for this release.
On that account, I must grant you three wishes.

She is SCEPTICAL. Uneasy.

CURIOS about this world...

THE DJINN begins to run his hand across the bookshelves - his fingers seem to be drawing scintillations from the books. *Is this how he learns?*

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
There are laws which cannot be broken.
Three is three, a number of power,
thus, you may not wish for endless wishes.

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
Yes. I'm familiar with the concept.

Now he is BRUSHING his hand over the desk. The Bible. The Quran in English. Glossy magazines. Even Alithea's LAPTOP.

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
Nor may you wish for eternal life.
It is your nature to be mortal.
Mine to be immortal.

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
Naturally.

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
Nor can I absolve sin or end all suffering.
I am only a Djinn.

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
That's reasonable.

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
These are the limits.

At this point, he places a FINGER on top of the TV... causing it to SWITCH ON.

It's as if THE DJINN is absorbing its content.

A MAN is giving a PRESENTATION - in English - on an adventurous technological advance.

The Man is ALBERT EINSTEIN.

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
What is this small human?

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
He is a... Wizard.
Guiding us through time. Einstein.

THE DJINN
(in Ancient Greek)
'Einstein.'
Are you a witch
who has him in a box?

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
No. It is science.
(English)
'Television.'

He echoes her.

THE DJINN
'Television.'

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
Waves of light and sound... 'transmitters.'

THE DJINN
'Transmitters.'

ALITHEA
(in Ancient Greek)
I'm not sure how it works.
I am a literary scholar. We don't know much.

THE DJINN
(in English)
I am a Djinn of modest power, but
I begin to understand these 'transmissions'.

ALITHEA
Oh. You have learnt to speak my language.

THE DJINN
This English is straightforward.
It's rules quickly learn I find.

Now, he prods the image on the TV screen.

There is a sound. High-pitched. Its volume increasing...

A GRID of PIXELS emerges in the form of a TINY ALBERT EINSTEIN.

He stands dazed in THE DJINN'S PALM, while the image on the screen is frozen mid-presentation.

THE DJINN
Would you like this Little Albert for yourself?

ALITHEA
No, no. That can't be good for him.
Put him back.

THE DJINN
I could expand him.
We could speak with him.

TINY ALBERT EINSTEIN
...how is this possible?

ALITHEA
No.
Put him back!

TINY ALBERT EINSTEIN stumbles about, his bewilderment intensifying.

The high-pitched sound builds to an alarming crescendo...

THE DJINN
Is that your wish?

He peers at her from OVER HIS SHOULDER. Revealing one of his LARGE EYES.

ALITHEA
No! It's your obligation!

With a gentle puff, THE DJINN blows Einstein's image back into the TV.

In that instant, the high-pitched sound stops.

ALBERT EINSTEIN recovers and continues his speech.

On ALITHEA, as THE DJINN shifts to address her...

THE DJINN
So what will you wish for?
What is your heart's desire?

ALITHEA
Now, let's not get ahead of ourselves...

She TURNS AWAY FROM HIM.

ALITHEA
I need to take this slow.

She removes her glasses.

THE DJINN
(casually)
I have all the time in the world...
Tell me about yourself.

ALITHEA
(hurriedly)
My name is Alitheia Binnie.
I am in Turkey for a conference
and return to my homeland in a day's time.

THE DJINN
Also...?

ALITHEA
Also, I have a confession to make.

He nods encouragement.

ALITHEA
Something I've never told anybody.

THE DJINN
Excellent!

ALITHEA
When I was young, there was a boy.

THE DJINN
Your first lover!

ALITHEA
No... he was not of flesh and blood.

THE DJINN
A Djinn?

ALITHEA
No. At that time I found myself in a school for girls.
Gaggles of girls.
I was...well I am a...
solitary creature by nature...

Now we see...

A CROWDED DORMITORY - 1983

Among the students - vigorous in their evening activities - ONE SITS STILL at a desk, HER BACK TO US. She is reading, leg jiggling, as she flicks from one page to the next with startling rapidity. TWELVE-YEAR-OLD ALITHEA.

ALITHEA (V.O.)
And this boy, Enzo, he came to me...

She sits on one half of the chair, as if sharing it with an invisible friend.

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 He came out of an emptiness,
 a need to imagine...

The image MORPHS briefly into a NOTEBOOK DRAWING of ENZO, SITTING NEXT TO HER.

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 He told me stories
 in a language only we two spoke.

The back of YOUNG ALITHEA'S THORAX - her shoulders hunch and her neck muscles strain. She is struggling to breathe. Her face is masked by a nebulizer.

She is alone in the SCHOOL INFIRMARY...

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 He would disappear when I had a headache,
 but was always there when I couldn't move for asthma.

A delicate, almost translucent HAND SETTLES ON HER SHOULDER. Comforting her. As her breathing eases, the hand fades away.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM...

On ALITHEA...

THE DJINN
 He was like this Little Albert you would not let me give you?
 An emanation?

ALITHEA
 Only the emanation of an absence.
 I feared he would leave, so I wrote him down.

WE SEE...

Her youthful hand, WRITING in a SCRAPBOOK thick with pressed flowers, collages of magazine clippings, drawings, notes and letters.

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 I filled this journal, bulging with facts...

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM...

ALITHEA
 But, the more realism I tried to insert,
 the more I began to doubt.
 The whole thing felt silly. I felt silly.

IMAGES...

Of several burning scrapbooks. CINDERED PAPER floating on the air.

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 After a time, I burnt it all in the school furnace.

Her DRAWING of ENZO'S smiling face - distorted by the intensifying flames.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA
And he disappeared altogether.

THE DJINN...

Places a hand on her shoulder.

THE DJINN
And yet...I am here.

ALITHEA studies HIS FACE (and, for the first time, so do we)...

Completely hairless. Huge eyelids hood lovely dark eyes flecked with malachite. High cheekbones. An imperious hooked nose. A wide simmering mouth sculpted like an Egyptian pharaoh's.

ALITHEA
(warily)
Contrary to reason...yes.

He takes her by both shoulders and gently wobbles her.

THE DJINN
I am here.
And we have work to do.

THEN...

A polite *TAP TAP* at the door.

This interrupts ALITHEA'S focus.

TAP TAP TAP!!

ALITHEA
Can you come back later please?

MALE VOICE
It's Room Service.
Dr Binnie, I have your breakfast?

THE DJINN indicates it's okay for her to go.

She looks at him, as if to say, 'Are you sure?'

He nods.

ALITHEA
Just a minute.

ALITHEA puts on her glasses and - as she walks hesitantly to the door - the ambient light lifts. She looks back into the room to see...

THE DJINN is gone.

*We may notice that the soundscape has become more naturalistic -
The humming of an air conditioner, distant traffic below and an aircraft overhead.*

She unhitches the latch and OPENS THE DOOR to find the TURKISH WAITER with breakfast.

ALITHEA
I'll take it. Thank you.

TURKISH WAITER
Please, allow me.

She grabs the tray.

TURKISH WAITER
Jolly good, Dr Binnie.
I hope you're well rested?

ALITHEA
I believe so.

She places the tray on a side table.

TURKISH WAITER
What do you plan to do on this fine day?
Visit the sights of Istanbul?

She signs the docket, and politely ushers the WAITER out...

ALITHEA
I'm not sure. I'm improvising.

TURKISH WAITER
Jolly good. Enjoy.

AT THE DOOR...

ALITHEA watches as he walks off down the corridor. She pauses, looking this way and that...

The world outside her room seems normal.

She hangs the 'Do Not Disturb' sign.

Latches the door shut. CLACK!

All is quiet.

As she moves back into the empty room...

THE DJINN EMERGES from the BATHROOM!

He is now the height of a VERY LARGE BASKETBALL PLAYER.

ALITHEA
A more convenient size, I see.

Although it's a snug fit, he too is wearing a bathrobe - matching Alithea's.

DJINN
I do what I can to fit in.

He is carrying a TRAY, adorned by a single flower in the neck of the Melted Bottle, and LADEN with DELICACIES.

THE DJINN
(offering them)
Please...

ALITHEA checks out the sherberts, the figs, and the pomegranates.

ALITHEA
I needn't have ordered breakfast.

Cautiously, she selects a SMALL SHORTBREAD.

THE DJINN
It is Nan-e nokhodchi.
Chickpeas, cloves and pistachio.
It will melt in your mouth.

THE DJINN watches as...

Struggling with her disbelief, ALITHEA takes a bite. Savouring it...

It is a wonder, and it WEAKENS her scepticism.

THE DJINN lays out the tray on a small table.

He POURS ROSE TEA for them both, before EASING his large frame onto the floor.

She sits in the CHAIR OPPOSITE.

ALITHEA
May I ask you something?

THE DJINN
Anything.

ALITHEA
How come you found your way into my bottle?

THE DJINN
It's quite a story.
That was my third incarceration.

ALITHEA
You've been trapped in a bottle three times!

THE DJINN
I may be a Djinn but I am also a fool
with too great a fondness for the conversation of women.

He leans forward.

THE DJINN
I need to be more careful in the future.

ALITHEA
How were you caught in the first place?

THE DJINN
By desire, how else?

ALITHEA
Who was she?

THE DJINN
Sheba.

ALITHEA
The Queen of Sheba?

THE DJINN
She was my kin.

ALITHEA
She was a Djinn?!

THE DJINN
Her mother was a Djinn.

ALITHEA
Is that possible?

THE DJINN
There are laws that allow the union of Djinn and mortals,
but they cannot produce an immortal scion.
As a donkey and a horse can only produce a seedless mule.

ALITHEA
What did she look like?

THE DJINN
Other than a thick glade of black hair on her legs,
she looked like any other human...
except, of course, she was...Sheba.

He says it with longing.

ALITHEA
By all accounts, she was very beautiful.

THE DJINN
She was not beautiful. She was Beauty itself.

He looks out the window...

The LIGHT plays on HIS PROFILE.

THE DJINN
I was, in every way, free.
I would come in and out of her sleeping-chamber.

We EASE FORWARD on THE DJINN

As he leans in...

TO KISS THE NAPE of SHEBA'S NECK

And thus, we are **BACK IN TIME - 3000 YEARS.**

THE DJINN (V.O.)

And I knew as well as any of her female slaves
the touches that made her shiver with bliss.

When his LIPS make contact, they form a VAPOUR which, as it cascades down her naked back, becomes a thousand miniature BUTTERFLIES...now morphing into schools of TINY FISH that tickle, pour and gush around the contours of her buttocks.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

...Never have I wanted a creature so.

ALITHEA (V.O.)

And she desired you in return?

BACK IN THE PRESENT - IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM...

THE DJINN

I was her plaything, her confidant...
I might have become more, but for Solomon.

ALITHEA

King Solomon (I take it).

THE DJINN

Blessed be his memory.

He came from across the deserts to woo her.

ALITHEA

Didn't she go to him?

THE DJINN

(indignant)

No. Never!

ALITHEA

But it's in all the holy books. The stories.
The paintings. Handel wrote music about it.

THE DJINN

Madam, I was there.

Solomon came to her.

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF...

An APPROACHING PARADE of envoys, artisans, beasts of burden festooned with gifts, and a vast army snaking back across the DESERT to the horizon.

All of this is being watched by...

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA from a WINDOW HIGH in her FORTRESS.

Standing close behind this MAGNIFICENT YOUNG WOMAN, THE DJINN whispers in her ear.

THE DJINN
(Spoken in Early Aramaic)
*You are Queen, free as a mighty bird,
seeing all things with an even eye.
How can you submit to the chains
that bind you to a man?*

QUEEN OF SHEBA
(in Early Aramaic)
*Sweet cousin Djinn,
there is no man who could so beguile me.*

KING SOLOMON PRESENTS HIMSELF TO THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

It is a phantasmagorical tableau.

SHE is sitting high on her THRONE, surrounded by her courtiers and...

A MENAGERIE, consisting not only of cheetahs, panthers, lions and monkeys, but also - in all shapes and sizes - Ifrits, Daemons and Djinn. Including ours.

His eyes are on SHEBA as she gazes down at SOLOMON, masterfully playing his LUTE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
He began with music.

Then...

A STRING on his instrument SNAPS. His finger is bleeding.

SOLOMON looks up at SHEBA, searching her face for empathy. He finds none.

By way of magic, he repairs the string and forges on.

As the music builds, we see that Solomon's instrument is enchanted. Its carvings animated by wood spirits - dryads - vocalising and playing accompaniment.

It is exquisite and heart-stopping.

Slowly drawing in the MENAGERIE of courtiers.

We creep in on SHEBA'S noble, INSCRUTABLE face.

The COURTIERS turn discreetly towards her...looking for the slightest response.

On her LARYNX... a little gulp.

IN THE SLEEPING CHAMBER

While a handmaiden massages SHEBA'S HAIRLESS LEG, Sheba herself pours melted wax on her other thigh, covered still in a patterned glade of thick hair.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

I did all that I could to dissuade her.
But when she used the scented wax of the Jabassa Bee
to remove the hair from her legs -
I knew that I was lost.

SHEBA listens intently as THE DJINN whispers in her ear.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

But I, like a fool, went on telling her
that her body was rich and lovely
but her mind was richer and lovelier and more durable.
And she agreed with all I said and dropped a hot tear.

THE DJINN gently licks away THE TEAR hovering on her cheek.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA is holding her cup of rose tea, but she is not drinking.

THE DJINN

She began to set him tasks, which seemed impossible.
To find a particular thread of red silk
in the palace of a thousand rooms.
To guess the secret name of her mother Djinn.
To tell her what women most desire.

ALITHEA

That does seem impossible.

He shrugs, ruefully.

THE DJINN

Not for him. He could speak to the beasts of the earth
and to the Djinn made of Subtle Fire.

CLOSE ON AN ANT...

Dragging a RED SILK THREAD over ancient stone.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

He found ants to discover the thread of silk...

A CREATURE WITH METAL FEATHERS...

Speaks FURTIVELY in SOLOMON's ear.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

...and an Ifrit to whisper the mother's name.

IN THE SLEEPING CHAMBER

ON SHEBA'S FACE...as SOLOMON draws her near.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

Then he looked into her eyes,
and told her what women most desire.
She was astonished,
and said that he was right.

Perched, unseen...

HIGH ON A TALL COLUMN

THE DJINN watches SOLOMON and SHEBA far below - their bodies entwined.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

And so she granted him what he most desired,
which was to wed her and be taken to her bed.

SHEBA...

Is astride SOLOMON. They roll into CLOSE UP and, underneath him now...

She CRIES OUT in ECSTASY.

In unison with her...

THE DJINN...

HOWLS in ANGUISH as he turns away from the heart-tearing sight.

Disclosing himself to...

SOLOMON

Who - barely looking up from his prize - lifts a slender finger and begins to draw THE DJINN down towards them.

The poor creature does all he can to resist, but the VORTEX is SO POWERFUL he seems to LIQUEFY, VAPORIZE, and thus is SUCKED ENTIRELY INTO...

A SMALL BRASS BOTTLE within reach of THE LOVERS. (It is the same bottle from which Sheba poured the bees wax onto her thigh).

THE DJINN (V.O.)

He was a great magician,
and imprisoned me with a word of power in a brass bottle.

THE STOPPER of the bottle seals itself with the red silk thread.

With one swift flourish, SOLOMON HURLS THE BOTTLE out the open window behind him.

Before it drops to the ground, a GREAT RAVEN swoops, takes it in his beak and flies off across the vast expanse of DESERT.

CLOSE ON...

The UNFORGETTABLE FACE of SHEBA, glowing with sweat and pleasure.

THE DJINN (V.O)

She made no plea for me. I was nothing to her.
A breath in a bottle.

THE BRASS BOTTLE...

Is carried in the CLAWS of the RAVEN, who soars over the masts of the EGYPTIAN FISHING DHOWS.

The RAVEN releases his grip on the bottle...

Then...

THE BOTTLE breaks the surface of the water, and sinks into the darkness.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

And so, I was cast into the Red Sea
and languished for two and a half thousand years.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA waits for his painful memories to subside. Not sure what to say, she offers him the tray of delicacies.

He declines.

She resumes her seat.

ALITHEA

Apart from sleep, what does one do in a bottle
for two and a half thousand years?

THE DJINN

Djinn don't sleep.

Now he's on his feet - pacing.

ALITHEA

Then how do you manage?

THE DJINN

For the first one hundred years,
I rage against my fate.
I pray to Boschkolo for release.
When that does not work,
I pray to any God I know
and then to any God I may not know.
And when, still, I find no answers,
I spend my time in waking-dreams,
revisiting all the stories of my life.
When I have exhausted this many, many times,
I return to my rage and my prayer
and finally... I play a trick on myself.

She leans in.

THE DJINN

I pray to remain in the bottle...
I beseech Boschkolo to keep me always in the bottle.

ALITHEA

Does it work?

He plonks himself down on the bed.

THE DJINN
 To yearn for nothing?
 To pretend to want nothing more
 than to be contained in a bottle?
 For a Djinn, it is the closest we ever come to death.

This gives her pause. Then...

ALITHEA
 Do you know the answer to her question?

THE DJINN
 What women most desire?

ALITHEA
 Yes.

This is where he wants her to go...

THE DJINN
 Don't you know? If you do not know already,
 I cannot tell you.

ALITHEA
 Well surely we don't all want the same thing.

THE DJINN
 Madam, your yearnings are not at all clear to me.

He nibbles a biscuit from the tray.

ALITHEA
 I'm at a point in my life where I have all I need.
 I dare say I am content, and gratefully so.

THE DJINN
 (probing)
 Tell me this then...are you a wife?
 A mother? A widow, perhaps?

ALITHEA
 I have no children, no siblings, no parents.
 I did once have a husband...

THE DJINN
 Aah! And what was the complexion of this husband?

ALITHEA
 His complexion?
 In the beginning, it was...glowing.

THE DJINN
 And in the ending?

ALITHEA
 It's not much of a story.

THE DJINN
 But it is your story.
 And it is always wise to understand those
 who have a hold on you. Please.

ALITHEA
 (shrugs)
 Well, we'd known each other from our youth.
 We married early.

ALITHEA'S PHOTO ALBUM - 2006

A Kodak print of ALITHEA and her HUSBAND in academic gowns, is being inserted between others of their LIFE TOGETHER. In each one he has an arm around her, while she stands awkwardly. Some have hand-written annotations: 'Faculty dinner, March 3, 1996. Jack ate fish, I had chicken. He liked my orange dress.'

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 In the beginning, we took pleasure in each other's minds.
 And bodies. We passed the years comfortably.

Then...

A PREGNANCY TEST STICK - showing POSITIVE - is taped to the album. Then...

A SONOGRAM image of a foetus in its first trimester. It is annotated...

'The first and last image of little Enzo.'

The next page is blank.

She closes the ALBUM and places it in a box - marked STORAGE.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA
 But as it happens, it all evaporated
 and we became...less.

THE DJINN
 Where is he?

ALITHEA
 He's in Hackney with Emmeline Porter.

IN A LONDON TAXI...

ALITHEA is speed reading. The taxi brakes for traffic, causing her to look up.

There on the CROWDED FOOTPATH, she sees HER HUSBAND and ANOTHER WOMAN - they can't keep their hands off each other. She seems enthralled by him.

ALITHEA is momentarily surprised...

ALITHEA (V.O.)
 He told me I was incapable of reading feelings -
 of reading his feelings.

She studies them from the back window of the taxi as they cross the road, laughing...

ALITHEA (V.O.)
The way my brain is wired is both
the source of my power...and my solitude.

We hold on HER FACE as she composes herself...then resumes her reading.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA
I suspect that's why I like stories.
I find feelings through stories.

THE DJINN
(enthusiastically)
Perhaps you could wish for him back.

ALITHEA
No. No. I thought I might grieve over loss and betrayal, but the fact is -
I was free. I felt like a prisoner coming blinking out of a dungeon.
I felt myself expand into the space of my own life.

ALITHEA sips tea.

ALITHEA
I could not wish for more.

This is not what a Djinn offering wishes wants to hear.

THE DJINN
You are a wise and cautious woman, Alithea.
But we all have desires -
even if they remain hidden from us.

ALITHEA
That's as maybe. But I am also a Narratologist
- and that's going to be a problem.
A very big problem.

His look is a query.

ALITHEA
I know all the stories of trickster Djinn
and how they manipulate wishing to their own ends.

It is an unambiguous warning.

It throws THE DJINN.

THE DJINN
(urgently)
I am not one of them!
I am God-fearing and honourable.
I am here only to grant your heart's desire.

ALITHEA
Even if that's true...
can we rely on those called on to wish?

THE DJINN
Huh?

ALITHEA
How do you know you can rely on me?

THE DJINN
(worried)
I hope so. With you, I certainly hope so.

ALITHEA gets to her feet...

ALITHEA
There's a silly little tale. I mean, you probably know it.
(matter-of-factly)
Three friends are lost at sea in a tiny boat.
They pull up a magic fish who grants them each one wish.
The first one, 'I wish I was at home with my wife'.
He vanishes.
The second one, 'I wish I was playing in the fields with my children.'
Off he goes.
And the third one, 'I miss my friends.'

THE DJINN
'I wish they were here.'

She SLAPS her hands together, as if to say - 'Just like that!'

Looking at THE DJINN, firmly...

ALITHEA
You've got it.
There is no story about wishing that is not a cautionary tale.
None end happily. Not even the ones that are supposed to be jokes.

THE DJINN
You and I are the authors of this story,
we can avoid all the traps.

She looks at him, clinically...

ALITHEA
Well what if I made no wish at all?

THE DJINN
Pardon?

ALITHEA
What if I made no wish?

This triggers a deep ANXIETY in him.

THE DJINN
Umm...(That would be)...unusual.
(That would be)...catastrophic!

He jumps to his feet, ENLARGING, banging his head on the CEILING LIGHT which swings violently as he stabilises to his more comfortable size. (This is a Djinn glitch.)

THE DJINN
 (agitated)
 I need to tell you about my next incarceration...

ALITHEA
 I'm all ears.

He HURRIES in the telling.

THE DJINN
 I will never know how my bottle came
 from the bottom of the Red Sea...

The IMAGES that follow match the URGENCY in his VOICE.

WE SEE (AT SPEED) ...

A FISHING NET dropped onto a shore.

The net flops open to reveal small fish and an OCTOPUS entwined in what appears to be a TEAR-SHAPED STONE. It is the BRASS BOTTLE, now THICKLY ENCRUSTED after 2,500 years.

Rough hands pull the octopus off the stone - which is tossed aside.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...to a palace in Constantinople.
 But I fancy, somehow, that it involved...

A SOLDIER - face down - is TURNED OVER...

Revealing the skeleton of a ROTTING CORPSE. Maggots and worms slither around a tear-shaped stone, which is yanked from the EYE SOCKET.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...the killing of an Ottoman warrior...

Next...

A WOMAN'S HAND...

Uses the STONE as a pestle - grinding brightly coloured spices in a mortar.

Then...

A labourer slots THE STONE carefully into a fortress wall, banging it tight with a mallet.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...The Fall of an empire...

Later...

The wall vibrates from the percussive forces of many cannon...

Loosening THE STONE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...And a girl in love.

GÜLTEN (18, slave girl) climbs THE WALL, using the TEAR-SHAPED STONE as her foothold. She peeks over the top to catch a glimpse of...

The splendid PRINCE MUSTAFA, expertly riding his horse.

He turns and LOOKS STRAIGHT AT HER.

She DUCKS - knocking loose THE STONE.

She falls to the ground.

The STONE lands beside her. Cracked open - it reveals the BRASS BOTTLE inside.

GÜLTEN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
And who are you?

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Gülten lived as a slave
in the Courtyard of the Concubines in the Seraglio.

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM OF THE HAREM

GÜLTEN has chipped away most of the stone from the BOTTLE.

Now she unpicks the hardened gunk from around the STOPPER...

Which BURSTS OPEN...and drops to the floor, spinning. ERUPTING FORTH.

GÜLTEN COWERS on the floor.

When the THRUMMING stops and the room is silent, she shakily gets to her feet.

GÜLTEN looks up at what must be THE DJINN'S TOWERING FIGURE, casting her in shadow.

Her big eyes spasm. She topples backwards...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
When I appeared to her she fainted...

His HUGE HAND reaches in and cradles her head before it smashes into the marble at the bottom of the stairs.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...and I had great trouble rousing her.

IT IS DAY...

GÜLTEN lies on her back in the bath, her eyes closed, THE DJINN supports her in the warm water. He murmurs in calming tones.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN is less panicked now.

THE DJINN
I made it clear that I meant her no harm.

He looks at ALITHEA...

THE DJINN
For I was condemned to the bottle -

ALITHEA
(impatiently)
Until you got your three wishes.

THE DJINN
Until she got hers.

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

GÜLTEN opens her eyes and tearfully speaks her first wish.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
The poor girl told me she was distractedly in love
with a beautiful man, and she wished immediately
to find favour in his eyes...

THE IMPERIAL HALL

On a desk laden with a silversmith's tools, a GIFT is unwrapped...

A finely crafted pair of RIDING SPURS - dangerous as they are elegant.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
As it happened, the one she most desired
was the splendid Mustafa. Prince Mustafa...

PRINCE MUSTAFA admires the spurs. He is delighted.

Pull back to include his father - THE SULTAN, SULEIMAN - glowing with approval.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...eldest son of Suleiman the Magnificent
and likely heir to his mighty throne.

They walk off, SULEIMAN'S arm around his prince.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Had I known what was to come
I would have risked the Furies of Iblis
and dissuaded her vehemently from her wish.

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

THE DJINN delicately rubs his thumb and forefinger together and a thin stream of oil trickles into the BRASS BOTTLE. It's as if he is concocting lotion out of air.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
But without thinking, I took my bottle
and conjured oils to prepare her.
Oils of enchantment.
Once used only by Sheba.

GÜLTEN THE SLAVE has covered herself in a fine sheen of oil. THE DJINN pours a bit more into her hand for the finishing touches.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I cautioned her to hide the bottle,
lest its powers fall into other hands.

*He lifts the BULLNOSE - the WEIGHTY MARBLE SLAB at the top of the stairs.
GÜLTEN takes the BRASS BOTTLE from him and HIDES IT in the space underneath.*

HE REPLACES THE SLAB.

MUSTAFA'S BED

PRINCE MUSTAFA is asleep. THE DJINN floats in close to his ear...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I went to Mustafa. I whispered her name.
He sent for her.

ON PRINCE MUSTAFA'S SPURS...

As he approaches two JANISSARIES guarding his CHAMBERS. They swing open the door to reveal...

GÜLTEN WAITING FOR HIM. She is veiled more for allure than modesty.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
It was so easy.

IN THE IMPERIAL HALL...

THE ASSEMBLED COURT - a shock to the eye - in its splendid and gaudy regalia.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
As a Djinn, I am endlessly curious
about the ways of humans.
So in my spare time, I took to wandering the palace
in search of its intrigues.

From a height, we move down through this EXTRAVAGANZA...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And there among the Eunuchs,
the Consorts and the Concubines,
I first saw Hürrem - The Laughing One.

She has HER BACK TO US, as she charms the fawning group around her.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She too was a slave
who had risen through the centre of them all
to become the Sultan's favourite.

Closing in on her.

The crowd hushes and looks up to a BALCONY. SULEIMAN has ARRIVED. HÜRREM turns and we see her fully for the first time...Her open face is high-spirited and, seemingly, guileless.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Suleiman the Wise
saw none but her.

The crowd parts as a LONG SILKEN LOOP is dropped from above. HÜRREM winds herself in the loop and is slowly - gracefully - lifted up to join the Sultan.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And she sought to protect his throne
in favour of her own sons over his beloved Mustafa...

All eyes are on HÜRREM.

Everyone is LAUGHING at this playfulness, including...

PRINCE MUSTAFA.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...And to this end
she had the Prince watched by many probing eyes.

Behind MUSTAFA we see Hürrem's CONSPIRATORS.

Among them is THE WATCHER - a Princess of the court - glaring at him. Resenting his presence.

ON THE BALCONY

SULEIMAN receives HÜRREM joyfully.

As they head, arms entwined, to their private quarters...

The CAMERA finds THE DJINN observing all this from his perch in the DOME ABOVE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
When I saw how Hürrem made
a masterpiece of her manipulations
I worried that my Gültén might be
caught in this web.

LATER

GÜLTEN emerges from Mustafa's CHAMBERS and enters the SHADY PASSAGE. THE DJINN has been waiting for her.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I tried to warn her. To be careful.
But she had already decided on her second wish.

No longer timid, she looks him in the eyes.

GÜLTEN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
I wish to be pregnant.

THE DJINN
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
*With Mustafa? Please no.
 Please wait!*

GÜLTEN
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
*Djinn, this is my heart's desire.
 Grant me my wish. Now.*

He sags, defeated...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Such a mistake.
 Because at this moment, Suleiman,
 - blessed be his name -
 is being undermined.
 His warriors believe he is going soft.
 More interested in his poetry
 than ruling with a strong hand.

IN THE BATHING POOLS OF THE IMPERIAL HAREM...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Gütlen, in the meantime, saw no reason
 why she should remain unseen.

Concubines, Princesses, their attendants, eunuchs and female slaves - going about their daily routine:

GÜLTEN is pouring POMEGRANATE JUICE.

She is IGNORED by those whom she serves - among them...

THE WATCHER...

Who is suddenly startled by an EXPLOSIVE LAUGH...

It's GÜLTEN! Calling attention to herself.

Fully-clothed and holding the SPOUTED POT...

She jumps into the BATHING POOL!

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Given she was carrying the son of the next Sultan...

ALL EYES are now on her as she emerges...

PROUDLY caressing her now evident PREGNANCY.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Despite my warnings
 she parades her newly swollen breasts and belly...

Defiantly, she hurls the POT into the pool, and struts off.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...and the whispers soon reached the seraglio.
The terrible plottings move all too quickly.

SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT...

A master of calligraphy - is crafting a love poem.

HÜRREM wraps her arm around him and draws him to...

A FILIGREED SCREEN...

Through which they spy on PRINCE MUSTAFA - surrounded by his JANISSARIES - in the Throne Room below.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Hürrem fuels the rumours
that the military want to take his throne
and replace him with Mustafa.
The Prince has become a pawn
in the ceaseless game of power.

One bows to KISS the Prince's SLEEVE.

AN INK WELL....

Has SPILLED across the CALLIGRAPHY. A puddle of BLACK INK blots out SULEIMAN'S poem.

IN THE BED CHAMBERS

HÜRREM holds SULEIMAN'S head to her chest and soothes his brow.

NOW, THE SULTAN stands tall and grave as HÜRREM unwinds a LONG GOLD SILK CORD binding his fine robes.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Suleiman the Magnificent.
Suleiman the Conquerer.
Patron and Protector of Empires.
Suleiman the Father was left with a choice
that he knows will break his heart.

A BOW STRING

Is unhitched from the Sultan's bow.

IT IS NIGHT

A HORSE AND RIDER pull up in front of a...

PALATIAL WAR TENT

PRINCE MUSTAFA dismounts. As the Stable Master corrals his horse, he hands his sword to one of the JANISSARIES and strides eagerly into the tent.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Prince Mustafa comes innocently
 into the presence of his father.
 To reassure him of his loyalty.

MUSTAFA
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
My Sultan.

SULEIMAN does not turn in response to this greeting. As PRINCE MUSTAFA bends to kiss the sleeve of his father's robe, SULEIMAN yanks it away.

MUSTAFA
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
Father?

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...And The Mutes are waiting for him.

Out of the shadows behind him, THE ASSASSINS emerge and MUSTAFA realises something is DREADFULLY WRONG.

In a swift, highly-practiced 'dance', two tongueless MUTES wrap Suleiman's BOW STRING around MUSTAFA'S NECK.

This GARROTE is hitched to the tent poles by the SILK CORD.

As they drag him back, another two ASSASSINS grab MUSTAFA'S LEGS and PLOUGH his SPURS deep into the carpet - ANCHORING HIM.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 He cried out to his Janissaries who loved him...

OUTSIDE THE TENT...

THE JANISSARIES bow their heads - numb to the sounds of his dying.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...but his voice was crushed
 and his breath was stopped
 by the string of his father's bow.

FROM ABOVE...

We watch MUSTAFA taking his FINAL BREATHS.

Only when the SON falls silent, does his FATHER turn to look...

CLOSE ON SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT

His face DISTRAUGHT.

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

GÜLTEN is ENTIRELY HAPPY. A brazier warms her. With a PEACOCK FEATHER, she playfully wafts incense around her belly and murmurs a pretty song to her unborn baby.

THE DJINN bursts in, FRANTIC...

THE DJINN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
*Gülten! Gülten! They are coming for you.
Make a wish!*

GÜLTEN leaps to her feet, knocking over the BRAZIER.

THE DJINN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Just one more wish!

She is struggling to understand...

GÜLTEN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Why?

THE DJINN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Gülten! They are coming to kill you.

GÜLTEN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
The Prince will protect me!

THE DJINN advances towards her.

THE DJINN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
*There is nothing he can do.
Make a wish!*

His desperation scares her. She thrusts out the FEATHER to ward him off. But because of the fallen brazier, it is now aflame...and it burns her hand.

GÜLTEN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
He loves me.

THE DJINN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Gülten. He is dead! He's dead!

Her knees buckle. She is struck silent.

THE DJINN eases off - afraid she will collapse.

She BACKS AWAY, through an open DOOR, which she BOLTS SHUT.

THE DJINN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
*All who cherish him are dead.
Hürrem is coming for you.*

THE DJINN pleads with her from HIS SIDE of the door.

WE ARE IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

He is on his feet - his back to ALITHEA - calling out, as if to GÜLTEN.

THE DJINN
MAKE A WISH!!!
Save yourself GÜLTEN!

He takes a furtive glance at ALITHEA...

Is the story having an effect?

Yes. She is RIVETED.

BACK - FIVE CENTURIES EARLIER...

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

THE DJINN listens...

But there is only SILENCE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
A few words and she could have been free
to bear her child in safety,
and I, to spirit away - at last -
to the Realm of Djinn.

He twists the handle, effortlessly breaking the heavy bolt.

The DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

He glimpses GÜLTEN at the far end of a long, dank tunnel.

She is RUNNING AWAY.

THE DJINN charges after her.

NOW...

AT A SUDDEN TURN IN THE CORRIDOR

THE DJINN has caught up to GÜLTEN and is about to grab her, when...

She CRASHES into a PACK of LEATHER-CLAD ASSASSINS.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
But she ran into the hands of The Assassins.
I was about to take them by force...

They throw a SACK over her.

One of the ASSASSIN'S moves directly into THE DJINN'S path and, by the intensity of his glare, forces him to stop.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...when I was blocked by a Follower of Iblis.

In a manner that is beyond reason...this 'ASSASSIN' TILTS 180 degrees so that he is now hanging from the ceiling, UPSIDE-DOWN like a BAT.

IN THE NEXT INSTANT...He is no longer human, but a SMALL, SHRIVELLED CREATURE with the MANY EYES of a spider, and mottled reptilian skin.

The DAEMON IFRIT drops to the ground. Standing smaller than a house cat, its limbs articulate like an insect's. Its tentacles - writhing, gelatinous, self-sodomizing.

THE DJINN cowers - TERRIFIED to his core.

JUST BEYOND...

He can see the EXECUTIONERS bundle a STRUGGLING GÜLTEN into a SACK and carry her off.

The IFRIT speaks in a series of clicking sounds, tongue inflections and claps - like a demented cricket.

THE IFRIT
(Subtitled in English)
*You are not wanted here, Djinn.
You cannot change her story.
If she does not wish...
you are doomed.*

CLOSE ON ALITHEA...

As if she is witnessing this. Then...

A VERY FAST - JOLTING - PULL BACK from the Agatha Christie room...

Into DARKNESS.

THE PALACE WALLS

The EXECUTIONERS carry THE SACK containing GÜLTEN to the BASTION of the fortress - the night sky above, the moonlit sea below.

They HURL HER over the high wall and into the Bosphorus.

THE DJINN...

Is hunched, frozen in pain.

The IFRIT - FOLLOWER OF IBLIS - snarls contemptuously.

After a long moment, when all is silent and still...

This phantasmagorical creature BURSTS - like the swollen egg sac of a mother spider...

Disgorging THOUSANDS of SPIDERLINGS who scramble in a thousand directions into the darkness of the tunnel.

This releases THE DJINN, who...

RUSHES down the warren of tunnels, to...

THE CLIFF EDGE

THE DJINN
GÜLTEN!!!

He LEAPS OFF the FORTRESS WALL. His black cloak slips off his back and billows away...as he torpedoes into the sea.

CAMERA LINGERS on the MIST, drifting across the WATER.

CUT TO

THE EMPTY SACK, gliding past CAMERA...

As THE DJINN hauls GÜLTEN back to the surface.

ON THE ROCKS BELOW THE FORTRESS WALL

THE DJINN cradles the DEAD GÜLTEN in his arms.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She made no wish to save herself.
No wish was made - to save us both.

It takes time, but we notice...

THE DJINN is FADING AWAY...

His image, TENUOUS...a NEGATIVE SPACE in the mist. Soon...

HE IS INVISIBLE

Leaving the sodden, arched CORPSE of GÜLTEN - ALONE ON THE ROCKS.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

Over ALITHEA'S shoulder on THE DJINN, as he turns to her...

THE DJINN
So, there I was - or there I was not, you might say.
Almost emancipated. Tethered to this world
by a third wish, unperformed.

ALITHEA remains still. Processing what she's heard.

Then...

ALITHEA
You realise, don't you? -
that you've just told me a story of a woman
who was doomed as a consequence of the wishes she made.

THE DJINN

Yes. But her failure to complete the wishes
also doomed me.

ALITHEA

Could nobody else complete the wish?

He sits on the bed...

THE DJINN

(calmly)

That was my hope.

ALITHEA

And that would finally liberate you?

THE DJINN

It was my only hope.

ALITHEA

But you were rendered invisible.

THE DJINN

Like a ghost, wandering unseen.

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM...

ALITHEA (V.O.)

And your bottle lay hidden under the loosened stone
known only to the dead Gütten.

We linger on the BULLNOSE TILE. Impenetrable.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

Yes. It was a predicament...

IN A LABYRINTH OF CORRIDORS...

THE CAMERA IS THE UNSEEN DJINN'S POINT-OF-VIEW

It LOOMS TALL as it FOLLOWS various inhabitants of the Seraglio.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

I tried to attract the attention of someone,
anyone who might help me...

CAMERA approaches...

A KITCHEN HAND carrying a slab of meat.

As the DJINN'S POV gets closer, it is repelled - like a magnet bouncing off another of the same polarity.

The CAMERA is thrown backwards through the CORRIDOR WALL, and then...

THROUGH the BODY and ARMOUR of a JANISSARY, standing guard outside.

The JANISSARY is ENTIRELY UNAWARE of the DJINN'S PRESENCE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
My stars, how I tried!

NEXT...

'He' RUSHES towards a CONCUBINE, bathing in the IMPERIAL HAREM.

Again, he passes frictionless THROUGH the BODY and INTO the WATER without making a splash!

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I follow their scent, their every step.
Willing. Pleading. Screaming!
Anything to draw them to me!

NOW...

The DJINN'S POV is frenetic. It hones in on a Zaouli-style DANCER. To the rapid-fire beat of his DRUMMERS - his legs pound a tray of coloured dust at his feet.

We SURGE directly into the Dancer's MASKED FACE...

Which seems to morph - briefly melting around us - ELUDING us...

We have passed RIGHT THROUGH HIM, and turn to look at the back of his head.

Like all the others, he is oblivious as he dances away from us, OUT OF the PLANE of FOCUS.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE SERAGLIO

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And I do this piteously for one hundred years.
With every failure, my will begins to fade.

THE DJINN'S POINT-OF-VIEW...

IS BLURRY NOW, and the SOUNDS MUFFLED, as we approach and pass by the various INCUMBENTS of the COURT.

And there - in all the blur - we glimpse a SHARPNESS in the image.

It is a CHILD - SCAMPERING in and out of the crowd.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Then, in 1620, hope comes in the form
of a boy with a sword.

THE DJINN'S POINT-OF-VIEW follows...

THE BOY - MURAD, seven years old - through the IMPERIAL BATHS and...

INTO A CORRIDOR

Suddenly, MURAD stops and...

Turns to LOOK AT CAMERA!

WE SURGE through him. The boy's face MELTS around us.

We come out the other side, and unlike the futile attempts of the past -

He SENSES the PRESENCE of THE DJINN!

He turns towards us, waving his sword like a blind man with a white cane.

As THE DJINN'S POINT-OF-VIEW backs away...down the corridor...

THE BOY FOLLOWS, leaving behind his playmates - their image blurred.

With increasing urgency, CAMERA LEADS THE BOY through...

THE LABYRINTH OF CORRIDORS

Now...

HE IS RUNNING TOWARDS US - trying to keep pace.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

By some means, this boy senses me
and I am able to draw him to the stone.

THE DJINN'S POINT-OF-VIEW ascends a narrow stairwell and passes backwards through A DOOR, as it melts momentarily around us.

And WE WAIT - on the other side - near the BULLNOSE TILE.

THE SECRET BATHROOM...

IS NOW IN FOCUS AND THE CAMERA IS NO LONGER SUBJECTIVE

The LATCH turns. The door opens, blowing away dead leaves.

MURAD enters the room which has been undisturbed for one hundred years.

Agitated by a gnawing sense of purpose, he drags his sword across the marble.

When it crosses the BULLNOSE, it makes a different sound.

MURAD stops.

He stares at the slab.

Without knowing why, he has a compulsion to expose what's underneath.

Wrapping his small fingers under the bullnose, he tries to lift it - but it's too heavy - even for a strong seven-year-old.

He wedges his sword in the back end of THE MARBLE SLAB and attempts to lever it open.

As he struggles, he yells for someone...

MURAD
IBRAHIM!

THE SLAB will not budge. He runs off, leaving the sword jammed upright.

Moments pass.

MURAD returns, dragging his hefty younger brother, IBRAHIM (five years old).

Together they push against the sword, DISLODGING THE SLAB THE TINIEST DEGREE.

That's when we hear the voice of a woman...

WOMAN
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Murad! Ibrahim!

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And just as I'm about to be delivered into their hands,
their mother finds them.

KÖSEM
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Come away from here!

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She is Kösem, widow of the Sultan Ahmed the First.
And the boys are next in line for the throne.

IBRAHIM runs to his mother, while MURAD defiantly retrieves his sword.

KÖSEM tries to grab him, but MURAD struggles free of his long robe and runs off - REVEALING the patterned glade of THICK HAIR on his LEGS.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
When I see the hair on his legs, I know that somewhere
in Murad's bloodline pulses the power of a Djinn.
I follow him everywhere, determined to draw him back to the stone.

TOPKAPI PALACE

MURAD - older again - swaggers into the THRONE ROOM. Both the SULTAN'S CROWN and his SWORD are far too big for him.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
But at the age of eleven
he ascends the throne as Sultan Murad IV.
And caught up by the usual intrigues,
he is even more lost to me.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

MURAD, a man now. A GENERAL - hardened and fearsome.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
At twenty, he leads his armies to war...

He MANIACALLY LEAPS from HORSE TO HORSE as he swings his wide-blade SWORD with BRUTAL EFFECT.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
He battles alongside his men
in the Caucasus and Mesopotamia.
Stories are told of his recklessness - even with his own life -
I despair of ever seeing him again.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN searches ALITHEA'S face for any sign of empathy.

THE DJINN
Hope is a monster, Alithea.
And I am its plaything.

ALITHEA
So he died?

THE DJINN
Not in battle.

ALITHEA is intrigued.

THE DJINN
Back in Istanbul, Kösem,
has to protect the throne.
She has to protect Ibrahim.

ALITHEA
The little brother?

THE DJINN
Yes.

KÖSEM WATCHES...

IBRAHIM (now 18 years old), naked and hesitant - being led into a PLEASURE DOME.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
He is last of the Ottoman Line.
He has to produce male children.
So Kösem locks him in a cage
lined entirely with sable.

Two slender CONCUBINES drape IBRAHIM in an VOLUMINOUS SABLE CLOAK.

It causes him to grin blissfully.

ALITHEA (V.O.)
Quite the prison.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
One he would never want to leave.

KÖSEM bolts the door.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
It debauches him. Royally.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN (V.O.)
He believes the greater the expanse of flesh
the more intense the pleasure.

IN THE GOLDEN CAGE

*IBRAHIM inspects a LINE of CORPULENT FEMALES, as if they were livestock.
Sniffing them, prodding their flesh with a stick to measure the wobble.*

THE DJINN (V.O.)
So Kösem seeks out beauties
- voluptuous and immense -
and brings them to his couch.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN
My fate turns - specifically - on this fetish.

ALITHEA
How's that?

SOMEWHERE IN A CONQUERED LAND...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
You'll see.

MURAD inspects a LINE of A THOUSAND CAPTIVES. All of them bound, on their knees, with their necks exposed to A THOUSAND EXECUTIONERS, who raise their SWORDS and wait.

NOW, at the head of the line...

MURAD'S terrible blade is poised above his chosen victim, a thick-necked Persian General.

THEN. Without mercy...

MURAD IV brings down HIS SWORD...

SWWOOOOSSH!

THE DOORS of the THRONE ROOM FLING OPEN

As COURTIERS of all kinds STAMPEDE to safety...

When they are gone, WE ENTER through the OPEN DOOR to be met with the sight of a PASHA and an elderly VIZIER - LYING DEAD - at the foot of the throne.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

Murad is back. Though he returns a conqueror -
he cannot shed his robes of blood.
War, indeed, has rotted his soul.

MURAD, panting from exertion, sits on his throne. Not bothering to wipe the blood from his sword.

KÖSEM is the only one who hasn't run. She stands tall and very still, watching her son.

THEN...

She makes a subtle gesture of obeisance and backs out of the room, quietly closing the door behind her.

IN THE EMPTY LABYRINTH OF CORRIDORS

WE RESUME THE DJINN'S OUT OF FOCUS POV

We hear the slow advance of a HORSE.

CLIP. CLOP. CLIP. CLOP.

THE HOOVES leave bloodstains on the stone floor. CAMERA rises to find MURAD in the saddle. HE alone is IN FOCUS.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

I wait until he is alone.
I am determined to draw him back to the stone.

MURAD glances back at the camera...

Sensing the WILL of the INVISIBLE Djinn - just as he did as a boy.

ALITHEA (V.O.)

I don't want to interrupt, but I do have a question...

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN pauses.

ALITHEA

Did it matter to you
what kind of wish such a man might make?
One so insatiable.

THE DJINN
No.

ALITHEA

Not even if it was profoundly evil?

THE DJINN
Not if it meant my freedom.

THE DJINN sees that this bothers her.

THE DJINN
 The truth is - he has other things on his mind.
 He believes he's invincible.
 And to rule indefinitely
 he must be rid of all rivals.

MURAD

TURNS AWAY and CONTINUES on his horse down the corridor.

THE DOOR TO THE GOLDEN CAGE

His SWORD at the ready, MURAD yanks the massive BOLT and is about to open the door when someone STAYS HIS HAND.

It's KÖSEM.

KÖSEM
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
Why waste your sword, my Lion?

She slides open a PEEPHOLE in the centre of the door, and invites MURAD to look inside...

He observes IBRAHIM, luxuriating in a Bacchanalia of OILED FLESH, food and smelly fur.

KÖSEM
Ibrahim!

He comes to them, docile and flatulent.

IBRAHIM
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
Big Brother...

IBRAHIM reaches his filthy hand through the peephole to caress MURAD'S FACE.

MURAD steps back in disgust.

KÖSEM
 (in Ottoman Turkish)
*He's a baby.
 How could he ever rule?*

IBRAHIM grabs his mother's breast.

MURAD storms off.

KÖSEM watches him.

She locks the peephole and bolts the door.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Kösem needs to stop him.
 Somehow, she has to distract him from his bloodlust
 with other gratifications.

IN THE THRONE ROOM

MURAD drains WINE from a GOBLET. He tosses it into the air, swings at it with his sword, and MISSES. It smashes to the floor - already littered with BROKEN GLASS.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 First, she arranges for him to be perpetually drunk.

Immediately, ANOTHER tumbler - full to the brim - is thrust into his hand.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 And then she tries something very shrewd.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN
 ...Something you might enjoy.

ALITHEA leans in...

THE DJINN
 She sends to find, from all corners of the empire,
 the best storytellers.

She acknowledges this with a faint smile.

SEVEN STORYTELLERS...

From different lands, have assembled around the THRONE.

ONE OF THEM is presenting his jocular tale. Murad's Warriors and the other Storytellers - can't stop laughing.

But not MURAD. He is glaring, agitated...chipping at the floor with the point of his sword.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Those who are not persuasive...

IN A TINY BOAT...

Another HAPLESS STORYTELLER is rowing frantically across the Bosphorus.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...flee in fear or fall to his impatience.

TWO ARROWS have landed - one on the floor of the boat, and the other in his lower leg.

FROM HIGH ON THE FORTRESS WALLS...

MURAD FIRES his TURKISH BOW once more. The arrow arcs across the sky and we watch as it finds its target. The STORYTELLER is DEAD.

NOW...

THE THRONE ROOM IS EMPTY, BUT FOR...

MURAD and the LAST REMAINING STORYTELER - an OLD MAN.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

There is only one who has the ability to enchant him.
To soothe with stories.
To hold him hostage to their unfolding.

For the first time, we see MURAD without a sword in his hand. He is reclining on his THRONE with eyes closed.

The OLD STORYTELLER builds to the climax of this night's 'episode'. And...

MURAD bursts into LAUGHTER.

The OLD STORYTELLER smiles back at him.

OUTSIDE THE DOORS TO THE THRONE ROOM

The Warriors, the Courtiers, the Grand Vizier and KÖSEM are waiting. Closed-out. Listening to the laughter.

INSIDE THE THRONE ROOM

Propped up against a column...

We find MURAD'S SWORD.

It is heavily rusted and being COBWEBBED by a small spider.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

This is his only friend.
And that friendship turns to love.

MURAD is on the floor at the OLD STORYTELLER'S feet, looking up at him...

Spellbound. Drunk.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

Since there is nothing else for me to do,
I listen gratefully.
For I, too, love being lost in his stories.

AN OLDER MURAD

Dissipated, shrunken and jaundiced yellow - he looks decades older than his twenty-seven years.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 When the old man dies,
 all in the palace flee to the streets.
 For they fear Murad's grief will incur fresh murder.
 But he just sits and howls, and drinks...

He is keening over the CORPSE of the OLD STORYTELLER.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...until he is empty.

THE DJINN'S SUBJECTIVE POINT-OF-VIEW

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 And my patience is rewarded.
 For in this state,
 I am finally able to draw him back
 to the secret bathroom.

The wildly swaying silhouette of MURAD approaches. His ATAXIC GAIT is so severe he can barely hold himself upright.

Nevertheless, he follows the CAMERA urgently down the corridor which leads to...

THE SECRET BATHROOM

As before, we PASS BACKWARDS through the DOOR as it melts momentarily around us...

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA
 I know where this is going...

THE DJINN looks at her...

ALITHEA
 ...He is too weak to lift the stone.

THE DJINN
 Too weak even to turn the latch.

INSIDE THE SECRET BATHROOM

For a few moments, THE DOOR LATCH jiggles feebly...

Then stops.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 So, he leaves...and drinks himself
 to permanent sleep.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

This is not what she expected.

ALITHEA
Oh.

THE DJINN
And there I am, left to my own oblivion.
With no one to hear my voice.
No one to know me. Nor feel me. Nor sense me.

He lets it sink in...

THE DJINN
You can't imagine.

He eases closer to her...slowly...imperceptibly.

ALITHEA
Actually, I can.

THE DJINN
Can you imagine the loneliness?
How it might overwhelm?

ALITHEA
(quietly)
I can.

THE DJINN
We exist only if we are real to others.
(Fixing his gaze on her)
Do you agree?

ALITHEA is mesmerized.

ALITHEA
I do.

THE DJINN
This then is our fate,
if you make no wish at all.
I will be caught between worlds.
Invisible and alone for all of time.

He leans in...

THE DJINN
(softly)
Make a wish, Alithea.
Make it your heart's desire.

She is utterly still. Spellbound.

THE DJINN is alive with anticipation.

ALITHEA
I'd be more careful, if I were you.

On his look...

ALITHEA
Obviously you managed to find your way out.

This takes the wind out of his sails.

THE DJINN
More or less.

ALITHEA
I'm inclined to think I'm in the presence of a trickster.

He shies back.

THE DJINN
That would be so much better.
My work would be so much easier.
But the truth is, I am just an idiot,
who has been extravagantly unlucky.

ALITHEA
I'll have to take your word for that.

They glare at each other. It's a stand-off.

ALITHEA
So Ibrahim, I suppose, becomes Sultan...

He shrugs.

IBRAHIM IS HAULED, WHIMPERING...

From the FETID DARKNESS of the GOLDEN CAGE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Ibrahim has to be dragged to the throne.

This sorry mess is overseen by KÖSEM.

She is now the EFFECTIVE RULER of the OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

VALIDE SULTAN KÖSEM WATCHES, THROUGH A GILDED SCREEN, AS...

IBRHIM, in full Sultanic regalia - sits on THE THRONE - cushioned by his PLUMPEST CONCUBINES.

He looks UTTERLY BEFUDDED.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
He appoints one of his concubines
Governor of Damascus.

THE LARGEST and FLESHIEST OF HIS CONCUBINES...

Makes her way down the labyrinth of corridors.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Her name is 'Sugar Lump'.
 By every measure, his favourite.
 And had she not been free to roam...

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...She would not have found the secret bathroom.

ŞEKERPARE - 'SUGAR LUMP' soaks in the bath.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 And had she not decided to take a bath,
 it would not have overfilled.

WATER spills out of the bathing pool, onto the marble.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 And had she not been careless
 as she made her way across the floor...

She heaves her frame out of the bathing pool and takes a few LUMBERING STEPS towards us.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 She would not have slipped...

Her LEGS SLIDE from underneath her.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Smashed the stone...

As she lands, the SHOCKWAVES FRACTURE the BULLNOSE TILE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 ...and found my bottle.

ON ALITHEA

ALITHEA
 Aah.

BACK IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

SUGAR LUMP extracts the BRASS BOTTLE from her rump. Baffled, she scrutinises this unexpected object. Then...

In a reversal of the moment we last saw him (fading into invisibility upon Gültén's death)...

THE DJINN EMERGES IN THE BATHROOM STEAM BEHIND HER.

First as a negative shape...then FULLY PRESENT!

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN

To tell the truth, I should have been more dignified.
But I began to beg shamelessly...

IN THE SECRET BATHROOM

SUGAR LUMP gets to her feet, GAPING UP AT HIM.

THE DJINN

(in Ottoman Turkish)

*Please, fine lady -
my situation is grave. It's desperate.
You must help me.*

SUGAR LUMP

(in Ottoman Turkish)

You smell.

THE DJINN

(in Ottoman Turkish)

*Wish. Wish for anything.
Wish for everything!*

SUGAR LUMP

(in Ottoman Turkish)

I want nothing to do with devious Djinn.

This is more than petulance. It is a deep loathing.

THE DJINN

(in Ottoman Turkish)

*Anything you hanker for? There must be!
Wish it! Speak it! Tell me!!
NOW!!*

SUGAR LUMP

(in Ottoman Turkish)

*I WISH YOU WERE BACK IN YOUR BOTTLE.
AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BOSPHORUS!!*

DEEP UNDER WATER

FISH SCATTER to reveal THE BOTTLE, stranded on the SEA FLOOR.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

He looks at ALITHEA...

THE DJINN

“I wish you were back...in your bottle...
at the bottom of the Bosphorus.”
(deferentially)

So here I am - fallen into your careful hands.

ALITHEA
(irritated)
Seems we cannot escape each other.

THE DJINN
You have me at your mercy.

ALITHEA
This wishing is a hazardous art.
'I wish' brings infinite unravellings.

THE DJINN
Not necessarily.

She stands up.

ALITHEA
It's there in all your own stories!

THE DJINN
I know, but -

She's pacing now.

ALITHEA
You say you're not a trickster.
You say you and I are the authors of this story,
but I'm unable to write myself out of it.

THE DJINN
Correct.

Alithea has lost patience with him. If he is a CREATURE of EMOTION, she is a CREATURE of REASON.

ALITHEA
Why don't you just hop back into your bottle
and I'll give it to someone more gullible,
someone more desperate, more greedy?!

THE DJINN
I'm not getting back in the bottle.

ALITHEA
Why not?!

THE DJINN
I'm not getting back in the bottle!!

ALITHEA
Well, I am not making three wishes.

THE DJINN
Then you're sending me to my oblivion.

ALITHEA
You're impossible!

THE DJINN
And you are giving me a headache.

ALITHEA
Alright. Here's what I'll do...

She takes a deep breath.

ALITHEA
I will make three wishes.

THE DJINN
(sceptical)
Before you die?

ALITHEA
Right now. One after the other.
Ready? Number one -
I wish your headache were gone.

She scans his face for a sign of relief.

He stares at her. Blankly.

She reaches for her tea cup.

ALITHEA
Number two, I wish for a sip of this tea.

She sips the tea.

ALITHEA
And finally, I wish for another one of those...

She takes a CHICKPEA BISCUIT from the bowl and pops it in her mouth.

THE DJINN is seething.

THE DJINN
You mock me.

ALITHEA
(what's the problem?)
Three wishes. Perfectly simple.
And theoretically...safe.

THE DJINN
I was imprisoned by Solomon
precisely because I cried out my heart's desire.
Only by granting you yours can I earn my release.

ALITHEA
I appreciate the symmetry.
But I cannot - for the life of me -
summon up one eligible wish.
And you are demanding three.

He's had enough.

THE DJINN
Is there any life in you?
Are you even alive?!

He stands, looming over her.

ALITHEA
(unfazed)
You know in some cultures,
absence of desire means enlightenment.

THE DJINN
Then you are a pious fool.

She glares at him.

ALITHEA
If I'm content, why tempt fate?

THE DJINN
And you're a coward.

ALITHEA
Don't goad me.

THE DJINN
(infuriated)
There is no Human, no Angel, nor Djinn
who wouldn't grasp the chance
to fulfil their deepest longings
and I am saddled with the one
who claims to want nothing at all!
Alithea Binnie, you are a liar!!

ALITHEA
You know, I'm beginning to wish we'd never met.

He FLINCHES!

THE DJINN
No. No! Non! NYET!
Don't say that!!

With each word, his body distorts. This time the Djinn-glitch is so SEVERE.

The TV and lights flicker and Cesm-i bulbul bottle in Alithea's hand EXPLODES!

We may notice a SMALL CUT on her cheek - in the shape of an Arabic numeral '3'.

ALITHEA is surprised by level of his PANIC.

His breathing slows.

ALITHEA
So, that's happened to you before.
And it was bad.

He looks at her.

THE DJINN
It was bad. It was bitter.
It was the cruellest wish of all.

ALITHEA
You were undone by silliness.
Yet again.

THE DJINN
I'm here...

He points to the shards of the CESM-I BULBUL BOTTLE on the floor.

THE DJINN
...because of a genius.

ALITHEA
Who was it this time?

THE DJINN
She was Zefir.

He begins to gather SHARDS of the broken bottle in his hand.

THE DJINN
Rarely among humankind
has there been such a wonder.

ALITHEA
But you're here as a result of her folly.

THE DJINN
I ended up in this as a *consequence* of Zefir.

ALITHEA
And this is the story you've been avoiding telling me all along?

THE DJINN
This is the story I've avoided telling even myself.

A CARD APPEARS...

“THE CONSEQUENCE OF ZEFIR”

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA holds up a finger, gesturing ‘Wait!’

She grabs the bowl of CHICKPEA BISCUITS from the tray, and sits on the bed.
About to eat them - like popcorn.

She is ready.

IT IS THE 1850's - TURKEY

RIDING IN A HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE...

We find a passenger, a WOMAN in a NIQAB, covering everything but her HAUNTED EYES.

ZEFIR, looking at the world passing outside.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Zefir was a foundling.
Married at twelve to a wealthy merchant.

Pull back to reveal THE MERCHANT next to her - an old man in an expensively tailored suit.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
He was much older than she, and kind enough,
if you think keeping someone like a bird in a cage is kind.

In the seat opposite are two more WIVES, shrouded in niqab, staring at ZEFIR.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
There were two older wives who didn't like her
and didn't talk to her at all.

A SPECTACULAR WOODEN MANSION ON THE BOSPHORUS STRAIT

White and ornate.

The CARRIAGE pulls up at the entrance.

The OLD MERCHANT is helped out, followed by the THREE WIVES, who hurry along a CANOPIED WALKWAY which hides them from public gaze until they enter the front door.

IN THE OPULENT ENTRANCE HALL

ZEFIR grabs a tray of food from the hands of a waiting SERVANT and storms up the stairs.

She is watched by the HOUSE STAFF, and the OTHER WIVES.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
Everyone, including the servants, seemed to be mocking her.
She had neither etiquette, nor learning.
She grew to no great beauty...

ZEFIR is now at the TOP FLOOR and opens the door to...

HER LOFT

She enters. BOLTS the internal locks and VIOLENTLY DISROBES, tossing aside her niqab in a rage.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And she was angry without knowing why.

HOLD ON HER FACE as she comes up for air - trying to calm her breath.

LIGHT streams in from one high dormer window - the only window into her UNIQUE 'CAGE' from which she cannot see out or be seen.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
As the fates would have it...

A LARGE FISH IS CUT OPEN

The DJINN'S BRASS BOTTLE spills out, GLEAMING - cleaned by the acids of the gut.

THE COOK holds it up, surprised.

The OLD MERCHANT nearby, fastidiously inspecting his KITCHEN - approaches for a closer look.

IN ZEFIR'S LOFT - EVENING

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...My bottle came to her as a love-token
from her husband.

The OLD MERCHANT undresses as he watches his YOUNG WIFE unwrap her gift...

THE DJINN'S BRASS BOTTLE.

ZEFIR nods cursorily and goes to her COLLECTION of at least one hundred FLASKS and JARS - most of them GLASS.

She places THE BRASS BOTTLE among them.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
When she had finished satisfying him and was finally alone...

LATER THAT NIGHT

She takes a CARVING CHISEL from her toolbox, picks up the BOTTLE and chips away at the seal.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...she managed to prise it open.

As The MAKINGS of THE DJINN blasts from the bottle, CAMERA pulls back to illustrate the process. Each stage is...

ANIMATED, AS IF FROM A JOURNAL, IN SEPIA INK.

First, an arrow indicates the mouth of the bottle and the following description...

Stage 1
Electromagnetic waves

Then...

Stage 2
Vapour

Stage 3
Organic particles

Stage 4
The formation of organs...

Now we see...

THE EXTERIOR OF THE MERCHANT'S MANSION

We favour the CORNER TURRET on the TOP FLOOR...

ZEFIR'S LOFT, ABOVE THE WATER.

Our view is largely obscured by SHUTTERED WINDOWS, but - by the play of light, and the sound of THRUMMING - we sense THE DJINN EMERGING FULLY from the BOTTLE!

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA leans forward, taking this in.

THE DJINN

It was as if she was waiting for me.
I saw at once that she was sharp.
She saw that I was desperate
for freedom and conversation.
I told her my story, as I have told you.

THE DJINN'S eyes are on ALITHEA.

THE DJINN

And she revealed herself to me
by the things she had made...

BACK IN ZEFIR'S LOFT - MORNING

It is full of intriguing clutter. Her room is a haphazard museum of a lonely life.

We are looking at INTRICATE EMBROIDERIES.

They depict a SHAH and his quest for flight - by means of FOUR HUNGRY EAGLES tethered above his THRONE. Lumps of MEAT dangling above them.

As THE DJINN admires the brilliance of her craft, ZEFIR invites him to look into an INGENIOUS ANIMATION DEVICE she has invented.

It is a 19th Century version of a GIF.

She turns a geared handle, and the embroidered EAGLES LIFT THE SHAH into the AIR. Over and over.

THE DJINN laughs with DELIGHT.

And ZEFIR delights in his pleasure.

NOW...

She UNDRAPES a small-scale model of an experimental FLYING MACHINE - an AIRSCREW made of cloth and wood.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

She could have been remembered like the genius da Vinci,
whose theories of flight were the talk of Sultans and Kings.
She was a great artist, but no one saw her art.

She turns a spindle and THE BLADES ROTATE, creating enough energy to LAUNCH IT high into the vaulted loft.

When it descends, THE DJINN ‘hovers’ the AIRSCREW above his palm - gently returning it to ZEFIR.

WIDE SHOT...

THE DJINN listens to ZEFIR as she paces, agitated, like a caged animal.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

She told me she was eaten up with unused power.
She thought she might be a witch -
except, she said, if she were a man,
her intellect would have been ordinarily accepted.

As she voices her frustration, she rhythmically whacks her hand with the Airscrew - then tosses it aside.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

She was a woman ardent for learning,
and I knew what her first wish would be...

ZEFIR, her eyes glistening with hope...

ZEFIR

(in Ottoman Turkish)

I want knowledge.

*I wish to acquire all knowledge
that is useful, beautiful and true.*

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN

And it delighted me to fulfill this wish.

The insinuation is not lost on ALITHEA.

AN ARABIC MANUSCRIPT... - NIGHT

ZEFIR’S FINGERS glide across THE PAGE. After little more than a second, she flips to the next.

HER EYES DART. Her leg jiggles with nervous energy as she READS with STARTLING RAPIDITY - like Alithea did at the beginning of this story.

THE DJINN (V.O.)

So I taught her histories, philosophies,
languages and poetry.

A COMPLEX GEOMETRICAL DIAGRAM - DAY

ZEFIR is studying Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion. Using a compass and stylus, she is drawing the Earth's elliptical orbit around the sun.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I taught her astronomy and mathematics,
which was bliss to her.

While ZEFIR focuses intensely on her work, THE DJINN serves her a tray laden with DELICACIES. He is happy.

NOW...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I brought her books and writings,
Which we hid in her collection of bottles...

He places a RED GLASS BOTTLE on a silver tray, and invites her to TAP IT LIGHTLY. THE BOTTLE seems to 'melt' into countless tiny beads, spreading thin across the tray, like mercury.

ZEFIR carefully places a well-loved BOOK in the centre of the tray. The tiny beads REGROUP, rapidly, and ENVELOP the book in glass.

She whispers a single, mysterious word (Sheeba) and - just like that - the RED BOTTLE is reformed, sealed, with the book trapped inside.

ZEFIR SMILES.

CAMERA RISES ABOVE ZEFIR AND THE DJINN...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She could always call on Aristotle from the red glass jar,
or Euclid from the green,
Pythagoras, or Spinoza
without needing me to re-embody them.

They are in vibrant conversation, surrounded by these COUNTLESS BOTTLES of auspicious content.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

The memory surges through him.

THE DJINN
We had the whole world in her room.
And I lost my heart to her.

Hold ALITHEA...Her larynx...A little gulp.

THE DJINN
It was my bliss to make her happy.
To see her flourish.

Then...

ANOTHER BOTTLE...

is placed in the COLLECTION. An offering from her HUSBAND.

It is the UNMELTED, pristine CESM-I BULBUL- The Nightingale's Eye.

CLOSE on ZEFIR'S SULLEN FACE.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And she flourished in every way.
Totalmente.

The OLD MERCHANT in his night shirt, stands directly behind her. He bends her over the bed, face-down.

He unbuttons a MODESTY FLAP at the back of her night dress, exposing her bottom.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She began to rebel even against
the gestures of submission
that her husband required.

To give him height, he steps onto a FOOT STOOL.

HIS FEET are disfigured with GOUT and his TOENAILS GNARLED and deathly.

THE OLD MERCHANT mounts her like a sad donkey.

HOLD ON THE OLD MAN'S FACE, pained with effort...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
For she acquired a mastery of love-craft...

Suddenly, he GASPS. Something she's doing gives him an INTENSE SENSATION. A thrill!

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...out of reach of any human
who had not made love with a Djinn.

He finds himself being PUSHED BACK onto a CHAIR stacked with books.

ZEFIR straddles him.

As his HANDS splay out, reaching for HER FACE, we see the GREY HAIR on his forearms standing on end, electrified!

His HEAD JOLTS BACK and his ARMS SPREAD, Christ-like. Ecstatic. He cries out!

OVERWHELMED WITH PLEASURE.

NOW...

They are at THE DOOR...

OLD MERCHANT
(in Ottoman Turkish)
Are you happy?

ZEFIR shoves him out. Then...

Grabs his cane, hands it to him - and in exchange - takes his PINCE-NEZ.

She shuts the door, bolting the locks.

CLANK, CLACK!

IN THE HALL OUTSIDE...

THE OLD MAN is left STUPEFIED - a whimpering zombie in a nightshirt.

He looks down at his groin, then turns back...CLAWING at HER DOOR. Wanting more.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
His craving for her became
an obsession.

SPECTACULAR CUMULUS CLOUDS...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And when he would come to her,
I would leave her room and journey the sky...

VIEWED THROUGH ZEFIR'S OPEN WINDOW

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I saw the oceans and the mountains
and the beasts of the forest where no man treads.

PULL BACK to find...

THE DJINN, CRADLING ZEFIR IN HIS ARMS. He is caressing her FACE, languid and pale.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And when I would return
she would be waiting for me.
I would tell her of my day and she would faint
with joy and disappointment.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

ALITHEA
Why didn't she make a wish to break free?

THE DJINN
There was something more important to her.
She had devised a 'Mathematica,'
a language to explain the forces which bring space and time
and matter into being.

BACK IN ZEFIR'S ROOM... NIGHT

STREWN with PAPERS, on which she has written endless ALGEBRAIC EQUATIONS.

We find her at the table, muttering, SCRIBBLING feverishly.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She was Promethean. Brave.
But she could not solve this puzzle.

HER INK-SPLATTERED PAGE...

Crammed with wild ALGEBRAIC SEQUENCES - flowing from her pen. She STOPS ABRUPTLY and CROSSES OUT her most recent calculation. She has come to a DEAD END. She sinks to the floor, foetal-like.

When THE DJINN puts a consoling hand on her shoulder, she shrugs him off.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
She needed a key. A key to open
the doors of her perception...

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

The afternoon light plays on HIS WISTFUL FACE.

THE DJINN
So she used her second wish.
I taught her to dream as Djinn do. Awake.

NOW...

THE INK SPLATTERED PAGE fades away but the CALCULATIONS REMAIN, suspended...FLOATING IN SPACE. It's hard to tell whether we are at the level of electrons or vast galaxies.

Yet, what we are seeing is what unifies them - MATHEMATICS.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
And in this way, the solutions came to her.
She was able to explain powers invisible...

We are moving through PLANES of Geometry, Calculus and Abstract Algebra - variations of the CELEBRATED EQUATIONS of Newton, Maxwell and Einstein.

AGAIN...IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

On ALITHEA, caught up in THE DJINN'S recollections.

THE DJINN
...electromagnetic fields and forces.
The very stuff of which the Djinn are made.

To demonstrate this, he wriggles his fingers and a VAPOUR - BLACK, RED and SHIMMERING - emanates from their tips.

ALITHEA
You are electromagnetic?

THE DJINN
As you are dust,
I am Subtle Fire.
And when she was to bear a child...
I was plagued with happiness.
For I knew it would strengthen us.

ALITHEA
She was carrying your child?

THE DJINN
A child of fire and dust.

ALITHEA
So where did it go wrong?

THE DJINN
Alithea, I loved her.
I loved the fervour of her mind.
I loved her anger.
I loved my power to turn her frowns into smiles.
I loved her more than Sheba.

ALITHEA
More than your freedom?

THE DJINN
Yes.

This is quite a confession.

He goes further...

THE DJINN
It became my greatest desire to keep her.
To remain her prisoner.
The thought of being set loose sickened my heart.

ABRUPTLY...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
I caught myself stopping her...

THE DJINN puts his fingers to ZEFIR'S LIPS.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
...lest she make her third wish.

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM...

ALITHEA is taken aback.

ALITHEA
Oh gosh.

*

*

THE DJINN
 I made a mess of it.
 She began to accuse me of trapping her,
 like her husband.

IN ZEFIR'S LOFT

*

THE DJINN 'melts' the CESM-I BULBUL and places HIS HAND in the 'mercury' of tiny beads. As he is ENVELOPED, he VAPORISES and scintillates like a heat haze.

As the BOTTLE REASSEMBLES, he is SWEPT INTO IT.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 I tried to make amends. To atone.
 I would put myself in the bottle. To be sealed.
 That way she could have power over me.

BACK IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

He holds back tears...

THE DJINN
 To be nothing in a bottle.
 I could do that for her.

ALITHEA's eyes moisten in response.

THE DJINN
 And every time, it would appease her.
 Every time, except the last, when,
 like a sudden squall, all thunder and lightning...

ZEFIR'S RAGE BUILDS...

She TURNS HER BACK on the CESM-I BULBUL BOTTLE...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 She began to weep and rail and said...

ZEFIR
 (in Turkish)
I wish I could forget I ever met you!!

IN THE AGATHA CHRISTIE ROOM

THE DJINN
 And she did - on the instant.
 She was out, I was in, and she had forgotten me.

THE DJINN turns away...in despair.

ALITHEA feels for him, keenly.

THE DJINN
 Alithea. How can it be a mistake
 to love someone entirely?

His gaze drifts away.

He is heartbroken. Human.

Then...

ALITHEA
I have a wish.

THE DJINN lifts his head.

ALITHEA
However, I'm afraid it may be too much to ask.

THE DJINN
Is it within my power?

ALITHEA
I hope so. Oh, I do hope so.

He looks at her. Her hand is shaking.

THE DJINN
Is it your heart's desire?

ALITHEA
I am certain of it.

He waits, motionless.

ALITHEA
I am here to love you.

Alithea inhales...

ALITHEA
And I wish for you to love me in return.

THE DJINN is processing this. Uncertain.

THE DJINN
You want us to make love-craft?

ALITHEA
Yeah, that too. All of it.

THE DJINN
And you would abandon yourself to this?

ALITHEA
Yes. Yes. I want our solitudes to be together.
I want that love professed in ageless tales.

She is no longer just a creature of reason.

ALITHEA
I want that longing you felt for the Queen of Sheba,
and that love you gave to your genius, Zefir.
I want it.

THE DJINN'S response is a long and hesitant pause.

THE DJINN
You give and you bind.
(Djinnbish)
Me?

ALITHEA
You.

THE DJINN
You?

ALITHEA
Me.
Is it too much?
Is it all too much to ask?

ALITHEA'S EYES are alive with courage, as he LIFTS her to meet his upturned face.

They 'melt' into each other.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*What are we to do with longing awoken?
How can I persuade you that I once found love with a Djinn?
In any case, few would believe me.*

CAMERA pivots away from them and begins to PAN, slowly, around THE ROOM...

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*Love is not something we come to by reason.
It's more like a vapour.
A dream, perhaps.
To lure us into the enchantment of our own stories.
If that's so, how are we to know if it's ever real?
Is it a truth, or simply a madness?*

The play of light on the WALLS suggests that time is ACCELERATING.

As we reach the WINDOWS, the clouds become stars. The day becomes night.
Then it is day again.

Now THE ROOM seems to PULSE with a delicate, SHIMMERING TREMOR.

The CAMERA CONTINUES its pan and - distorted in the MIRROR opposite the bed - we glimpse slivers of their intimacy. Writhing shapes and colours incandescent.

When CAMERA finally comes to rest on The Lovers again, ALITHEA is FACING US, CRADLED by THE DJINN. The lower half of his body seems to be COILED through her legs and around her, like a great python. Glistening blue-black.

As we push in, ALITHEA is given to intermittent tremblings - aftershocks.

She looks DIRECTLY AT CAMERA. Her EYES are blood-red orbs with irises the colour of malachite. Then...

As she mellows...with each breath...they become NORMAL.

FADE TO BLACK

ALITHEA'S SLEEPING FACE

We are CLOSE ENOUGH to see the RAPID EYE MOVEMENTS behind her LIDS.

EASE BACK, as she slowly emerges from a deep hibernation.

She is AWASH with SUNLIGHT and the SOUNDS of ISTANBUL - traffic, the voices of the street and the bustle of boats and ferries.

We see that - for the first time - the BALCONY DOORS are WIDE OPEN.

(The sounds and the light are now naturalistic, INFERRING we are back in REALITY)

She sits up, tangled in the sheets and...

We notice that she is ALONE in the bed.

THE BATHROOM

The bath is filling.

ALITHEA is brushing her teeth.

AT THE BATHROOM MIRROR

ALITHEA stops brushing her teeth.

ALITHEA
I leave for London today.
Will you come home with me?

We can barely differentiate THE DJINN'S ANSWER from the sound of the RUNNING WATER and the ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH...

She smiles.

ALITHEA
It's not such an easy place nowadays,
but it will be better if you're there.

She resumes brushing her teeth.

(Is THE DJINN REAL or just a COMFORTING FANTASY?)

AIRPORT DEPARTURE SECURITY QUEUE

ALITHEA places her shoes, carry-on and laptop into trays and sends them towards the X-RAY MACHINE.

She steps through the FULL BODY SCANNER. The screen reveals unknown objects in each of her jacket pockets.

A female SECURITY OFFICER beckons her.

SECURITY OFFICER
Please step out.
What is in your pockets?

Out of one pocket, ALITHEA carefully reveals a CRYSTAL BOTTLE and from the second pocket, the SCREW CAP.

ALITHEA
It's an empty bottle and a top.

SECURITY OFFICER
Please put through X-ray.

ALITHEA
It's very delicate and I don't want it to get damaged.

SECURITY OFFICER
It will not be damaged. Please put it through X-ray.

ALITHEA
(insistent)
I prefer that it didn't go in there.

A SURLY SUPERVISOR approaches.

SURLY SUPERVISOR
Passport. Boarding Pass.

ALITHEA hands the documents to him. He checks them. Then opens his hand for the BOTTLE.

ALITHEA
It's quite fragile...

He silences her. Takes the BOTTLE, sniffs it, and holds it up to the light.

Turning it this way and that.

ALITHEA
It's a salt shaker.

She watches as he tips THE BOTTLE upside-down, takes a PENCIL, inserts it rudely, SWIZZLES it around and SHAKES it VIGOROUSLY. Then...

The SUPERVISOR screws the CAP back on the bottle.

He is about to give it back, when ALITHEA, reaching out too eagerly...

Causes him to withdraw it. Teasing her.

ALITHEA
No! No X-Ray! Please!

ALITHEA makes one last attempt to stop the bottle going through the x-ray machine, but the SUPERVISOR blocks her way and the female GUARD puts a restraining hand on her.

The SUPERVISOR places the BOTTLE in a plastic tub and sends it THROUGH the X-RAY MACHINE.

ALITHEA gasps.

The SUPERVISOR and his team scrutinize her as...

The BOTTLE comes out the other side.

The technician behind the x-ray screen shrugs - 'nothing there'.

ALITHEA removes the CAP from the BOTTLE, glaring at the SUPERVISOR.

Mindful of the large, impatient QUEUE, with a somewhat contemptuous wave of his hand, he sends her on her way.

IN FLIGHT, FROM ISTANBUL TO LONDON...

We find ALITHEA sitting UTTERLY STILL in the aisle seat - her eyes fixed on the OPEN BOTTLE cupped in her hands.

A MODEST WHITE TOWNHOUSE - NUMBER 333, PRIMROSE HILL, LONDON

The street is empty, but for the Homeless and a Mother in a burqa with a Child. There is angst-ridden graffiti on the walls.

This is the Modern World in a state of unease.

A taxi moves off. ALITHEA stands outside her home.

INSIDE...

She places the OPEN MINI-BAR BOTTLE on a shelf, amid her diverse COLLECTION of GLASS OBJECTS. She steps back and waits.

Nothing happens.

She gives the BOTTLE a little shake...then puts it back.

Still nothing.

ALITHEA
In your own time...

The bottle, it seems, is just a bottle.

She backs away.

THE BEDROOM

She hangs her jacket in the wardrobe and we PAN her back to the SUITCASE on the bed.

As CAMERA encroaches on her BACK, we become aware of a DISTINCTIVE THRUMMING downstairs - from the room below.

ALITHEA goes to the LANDING of the DOUBLE-HEIGHT ATRIUM and looks down to catch a brief view of...

HER DJINN!

The sight of him fills her with pleasure.

ALITHEA comes down the stairs and into the...

THE IVY-WALLED COURTYARD

...Where she finds him, standing VERY STILL in the centre of the small garden. He is looking up into the London sky.

She quietly enters his meditative space.

THE DJINN
The air is thick here.
Full of insistent voices and rushing faces.

ALITHEA
Oh? Like Tiny Einstein?
Television and phone towers and such?

THE DJINN
Yes, all your ingenious devices.
All murmuring at once.
Bend your head.

In profile, he bows, lowering his forehead close to the crown of her head...

At first the sounds are faint, but they BUILD RAPIDLY to a CACOPHONY. Among the news alerts, police radio chatter, airline pilots negotiating landing slots, ringtones, the gabble of Apps, the pinging of car-key remotes - we hear conversations on phones, talk-back, TV and online - a rancorous multitude of politicians, comedians, pop stars, opinionators and the like...

Until, after a few short seconds, it's ALL TOO MUCH FOR ALITHEA!

She pulls away.

ALITHEA
You hear all that?!

He nods...his eyes are in a state of SHIMMERING TREMOR. His skin is VAPOROUS, SCINTILLATING, as if MUTED IMAGES are ROILING inside of him.

THE DJINN
I also see it, and feel it.
(making light of it)
I am a 'Transmitter'!

He recovers, regaining focus.

ALITHEA
Isn't it all too much?

THE DJINN
I am a Djinn. I can adapt.
I'll soon get used to it.

THEN...

From over the NEXT-DOOR FENCE, another VOICE. The accent is posh...

OLDER WOMAN
(off screen)
She's back. I believe she's back!

A refined, 70-year-old, elegantly dressed woman - CLEMENTINE - pokes her head over the garden wall and peers nosily into Alithea's yard.

CLEMENTINE'S twin - FANNY - appears on their BALCONY.

CLEMENTINE
Is she with someone?

FANNY
(to Clementine)
I think she's talking to herself again!

ALITHEA
Hello Clementine. Fanny.
Are you well?

CLEMENTINE
Did you have any trouble?

ALITHEA
Trouble? What kind of trouble?

FANNY
With your foreign friends.

CLEMENTINE
Because we often ask ourselves:
'Why would Dr Binnie waste her time and intelligence
studying the ways of others - instead of upholding our own?'

FANNY
Embarrassed by our British culture, are we?

ALITHEA
No...no.
I am rather more likely to be embarrassed by
anybody reflexly frightened of anybody different.

CLEMENTINE
What exactly are you saying?

FANNY
She's calling us bigots.

ALITHEA
Your word, not mine.

CLEMENTINE
You misunderstand. It's not how they look, dear.
It's how they live. What they believe.

FANNY
What they eat.

ALITHEA
What are you on about!

CLEMENTINE
Everywhere on goes, ethnics.
We are being overwhelmed,
and we're inviting our doom.

FANNY
It's not natural.

CLEMENTINE
Birds belong in the air. And fish in the sea...

FANNY
And that is how the Good Lord meant us to be.

ALITHEA
You're just spouting rubbish
from start to finish.

ALITHEA glances at THE DJINN...but HE IS NOT THERE.

She looks around. He is gone.

CLEMENTINE
It's science.
It's a scientific fact!

ALITHEA
It's a false analogy.
Animals do have a natural habitat.
That is true.
But human beings are capable of living in
any environment they bloody-well choose!

FANNY
That's not a fact...

A PLANE ROARS overhead, drowning out parts of their argument.

ALITHEA
What are you saying?

FANNY
...It's an opinion.

CLEMENTINE
And you're wrong!

ALITHEA
I'm not putting up with any more of this.

FANNY
Come away, Clem. Let the crazy lady be.
We're never going to get any sense out of her.

As they huff off...

ALITHEA
You know, I've never said this to you before.
But you're both...PITIFUL.

CLEMENTINE
Shut your CAKE-HOLE.

ALITHEA
...PEA-BRAINED AND PITIFUL.

CLEMENTINE
YOU, FUCK-FACE! Stop your IVY growing
on OUR SIDE OF THE WALL!

When they have gone, ALITHEA storms back...

INTO THE HOUSE

And slides the glass doors SHUT!!

She is seething. Unable to let it go.

ALITHEA
Why do I let them get to me?!
I should feel sorry for them!

She opens a draw, grabs an ASTHMA INHALER and takes a puff.

ALITHEA
This is my home. It's my sanctuary.

She yells at the wall shared in common with Clementine and Fanny.

THE DJINN has been observing her.

ALITHEA
I could wish them...(she speaks Djinnbish)
That's not a wish, by the way.

THE DJINN
I know.

As she struggles to calm herself, he eases forward. The closer he gets, the louder the cacophony. His 'transmitter', as it were, is turning up the volume.

This time, we see the EFFORT on his FACE and in his BODY as he begins to BEND the unbearably strident SOUNDS and VOICES (including echoes of the quarrel with Clem and Fanny) until they become more mellifluous. MUSICAL. Thrumming and harmonious, it recalls the music that we first heard when King Solomon serenaded the Queen of Sheba. And, as they touch foreheads...

We see ALITHEA'S angst begin to melt away.

This is the Song of Transference. Not quite a lullaby, nor an anthem - it is ancient, soaring and full of longing.

FADE TO BLACK

THE DJINN'S MUSIC...

Fills the space and continues in support of THE BRIEF VIGNETTES that follow...

Through a FROSTED GLASS WALL, we see UNIVERSITY types going about their business. CAMERA PULLS BACK to find ALITHEA, typing at a desk in a SMALL ROOM full of books and academic papers.

Now she is in the CAFETERIA, nibbling lunch and RUMINATING as she watches the RAIN OUTSIDE.

Later, she is on The TUBE, making her way home.

It is EVENING. ALITHEA is leaving the LOCAL SUPERMARKET with the day's shopping.

She WALKS HOME in the rain-washed streets.

THE MUSIC crescendos and STOPS as...

ALITHEA taps the code on the KEYPAD, which unlocks...

THE FRONT DOOR OF HER TOWNHOUSE

ALITHEA finds THE DJINN in the dining room, sitting at the table, his BACK TO CAMERA. (As in the hotel room and in the time of Gülsen, he has found clothes appropriate to the circumstance.)

On the table sit the familiar pot of rose tea and the tray of delicacies.

She embraces him from behind.

ALITHEA
My Djinn.

THE DJINN
How was your day?

ALITHEA
 Every listening ear was yours.
 Every voice. Every scent and touch.
 You were everywhere.

As this is spoken...

We CUT TO their faces. He reaches out and takes a NAN-E NOKHODCHI from the brass bowl. He nibbles it.

ALITHEA'S face lights up - an inspiration.

She grabs the BOWL...

ALITHEA
 Back in a minute.

He turns to watch her as she makes for the front door.

STREET EXTERIOR - PRIMROSE HILL, LONDON

ALITHEA walks resolutely from her house to the NEIGHBOURS - Clementine and Fanny.

She taps the door-knocker.

A RAKING SHOT...

As she waits.

In the background, we see the PORTICO of her front door, from which THE DJINN emerges, casually lifting his hoodie over his ears.

At this point, we hear the muffled presence of CLEM and FANNY from inside.

...Who is it? ...I believe it's her! ...What does she want?

CLEMENTINE opens the door. FANNY is at her side...

ALITHEA
 Clem, Fanny,...

She offers them the NAN-E NOKHODCHI.

ALITHEA
 Chickpea, cloves, pistachio.

CLEM and FANNY look at the biscuits, doubtfully.

To reassure them, ALITHEA picks one...

ALITHEA
 They will melt in your mouth...

She tastes it, eagerly.

In response, CLEM reaches out and carefully - lest it crumble in her fingers - chooses one, hands it to FANNY, then takes another for herself.

CLOSE on ALITHEA nodding encouragement, as we see someone, OUT-OF-FOCUS, approaching.

CLEM is about to pop the biscuit in her mouth, when...

THE DJINN appears DIRECTLY BEHIND ALITHEA.

Nothing on the faces of CLEM and FANNY indicates that they see him.

ALITHEA, however, takes a momentary glance back and then addresses Clem and Fanny...

ALITHEA
This is my friend.
He'll be staying for a while.

CLEM and FANNY'S FACES remain inscrutable.

THE DJINN utters a single word...

THE DJINN
Hello.

HOLD CLEM and FANNY. Time is suspended...

Until, finally, they say...

CLEMENTINE & FANNY
Hello.

THE DJINN is real to others.

CUT TO BLACK

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*My Djinn told me, when they come together,
in the Realm of Djinn - they tell each other stories.
Stories are like breath to them.
They make meaning.*

Out of the black we see...

DRONE IMAGES OF SPRAWLING TECHNOLOGY

RADIO, TV and CELL PHONE TOWERS - TRANSMITTERS pointing in all directions. Buildings covered with white SATELLITE DISHES, like rampant mushrooms.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*'Yes,' I said, 'That's just how it is with us!'
 Each story we tell is a fragment
 in an endless, shape-shifting mosaic.
 And this small pebble, like all stories, must end.
 If it's about wishing - it's a cautionary tale.
 So how will it go wrong? Perhaps it already has...*

AS ALITHEA ADDRESSES A CROWD...

In an over-packed LECTURE THEATRE...

THE DJINN stands at the back in his LONDON THREADS - the long coat, the beanie, and leather gloves.

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*In the days that followed,
 the Djinn would accompany the Narratologist to her work.
 And when he wasn't with her,
 he would go in eager exploration of the world.*

IN A NEUROSURGICAL SUITE

Unseen in the shadows, THE DJINN observes a TEAM of MEDICOS perform advanced Cerebral Angiography. They are lit only by the glow of multiple screens, as they guide their catheters...

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 Today I had such a marvellous day.
 I saw many things.
 I watched a human look into the living brain of another
 and arrest a fatal bleeding.

THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER - GENEVA

THE DJINN is in awe of this prodigious technological apparatus.

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 I visited the 'collider' - a vast gizmo -
 which probed the essence of matter.

A GIANT RADIO TELESCOPE - JODRELL BANK

THE DJINN (V.O.)
 And then I saw a dish. A great dish,
 that listens to the whispers of stars long dead.

IN ALITHEA'S LIVING ROOM...

They lounge by the fireplace.

THE DJINN
 Humankind, is a wonder, Alithea.

ALITHEA
I'm happy you think so.

THE DJINN
All this, since I was trapped in Zefir's bottle.
All these astonishments in less than 200 years.

ALITHEA
Yes, but that's just engineering. Technology.
Despite all the whiz-bang, we remain bewildered.

THE DJINN
Oh?

ALITHEA
...When we can't contain the chaos,
we are filled with dread and panic
and we turn on each other.

He sits up to look at her directly.

THE DJINN
Well of course. You're human.
That is your nature.

ALITHEA
And so the story never changes.
Hate prevails. It metastasizes and outlives love.
I just want to talk about love.

THE DJINN
Such a mess of contradictions.
All of you.

ALITHEA
Thank you very much.

THE DJINN
Humankind. What a conundrum.
You fumble around in the dark and yet
you herd your intelligence to great effect.
It is quite a story.
I can't wait to see where it goes.

ALITHEA regards him solemnly.

ALITHEA
Or how it might end?

THE DJINN
That too... A mortal will never know.
But a Djinn might. A Djinn has all the time in the world.

ALITHEA
Aren't you the lucky one.

THE DJINN
Maybe. But you creatures of dust
have managed to eclipse the power and purpose of Djinn and Angels.
You have no use for us, perhaps we will wither and...

ALITHEA
And fade away?

THE DJINN
Yes.

ALITHEA
That used to be the subject
of all my lectures and papers.

THE DJINN
I know.

ALITHEA
And yet...here you are.
(quietly)
My impossible.

THE DJINN
Yes.

Their smiles are faint. The mood is pensive.

THE TOWNHOUSE - PRIMROSE HILL, LONDON

We follow ALITHEA as she HURRIES to her front door.

SHE ENTERS...

ALITHEA
Hello? I'm home.

CAMERA stays in the LIVING ROOM - and waits - as she checks out the garden and upstairs.

ALITHEA
Djinn?...

She comes downstairs...

And stands...in the silence.

At that moment...

She notices a few FINE FLECKS of ASH drifting around her.

They are coming from a door - slightly ajar.

She goes to investigate and we follow her into...

THE CELLAR

And there, in the dark and the rising damp she finds...

THE DJINN.

He is propped up - back to us - against the stone wall. Hunched over. Foetal-like.

ALITHEA
My love?

He doesn't move.

She reaches out. As she strokes his coat, he begins to CRUMBLE under her touch.

ALITHEA GASPS.

She turns on the light and moves to see his face.

The sheen of his dark satin skin is DULL and GREY.

He is frosted in a FINE ASH.

His EYES are open - OPAQUE - lifeless.

ALITHEA
Djinn...What's this...

The faint breeze from upstairs is eroding his features - FLECKS of him FLOAT up into the shafts of light.

ALITHEA doesn't dare touch him again.

She incants his name in a hoarse, frantic whisper.

ALITHEA
Can you hear me?

Panicked. Desperate.

ALITHEA
Djinn! Speak to me.

Nothing.

ALITHEA
Try to speak to me.

Then...

ALITHEA
I wish you to speak to me!

And it works. Because it is a SECOND WISH.

But, as he opens his mouth to speak, part of HIS FACE threatens to fall away.

ALITHEA reaches out to stop it. And ON HER TOUCH...

His powdery skin QUIVERS and healthy, vibrant COLOURS RADIATE from under her fingers.

The ash becomes vapour...

And he is STARTLED back into the world.

(He tries to articulate the word 'Alithea' but it's lost in Djinnbish.)

THE DJINN
I was...ss-sleeping.

ALITHEA
Djinn don't sleep.

His eyes regain focus.

He lumbers to his feet and pulls his coat back over his shoulders.

He clammers UP THE STAIRS and out of the cellar. Gathering himself...

THE DJINN
Let's go for a walk.
A long, bracing walk!
I have prepared something for us.

She notices the HEM of his FULL-LENGTH CASHMERE COAT DRAGGING on the floor. And the SLEEVES are TOO LONG for his arms!

He tries to shake it off... Djinn-glitching again.

He manages to shape-shift, ENLARGING back to his USUAL SIZE.

THE DJINN
(manic)
I have it all planned.
A most wonderful night for us.
It will be amazing.
The best time of your life!

He puts on his beanie and is about to open THE FRONT DOOR...

ALITHEA
No! No! Stop!

This stops him. He turns to look at her.

THE DJINN
These electromagnetic fields.
I can push them from my head.
Push them away.

Avoiding her, he slips back into the LIVING ROOM.

He picks up a tray of food, a tennis racquet and a ukulele.

THE DJINN
(floundering)
We'll go for a picnic.
We'll play the ukulele.

She stops him. And calmly begins to take the objects from him...

THE DJINN
Alithea...there is a place for me here.

ALITHEA
These forces, they will never go away.
Not from this world.

THE DJINN
I will overcome them. I can do that for you.
You are My Alithea. And I love you.

ALITHEA
Thank you. Thank you for trying.

THE DJINN
You don't think that I love you?

ALITHEA
Love is a gift.
A gift of oneself...given freely.
It's not something one can ever ask for.

As he grasps the idea...

ALITHEA
I tricked us both.
The moment I spoke that wish,
I took away your power to grant it.

She lets this sink in.

ALITHEA
I, more than anybody, should have known that.
I'm not going to screw this up again.

A deep breath...

ALITHEA
My Djinn, if this world is not for you...

He is utterly still. His breath suspended.

ALITHEA
I wish that you return to where you belong.
(whispers)
...Wherever that may be.

CRAACKKK!

They turn to see...

The BOTTLE DISINTEGRATE and LIQUIFY into tiny marbles of glass. As they cascade onto the floor, they fragment and trickle away to...nothing.

She smiles, eyes moist, in celebration of his release.

He is OVERCOME with gratitude.

There is something he wants her to know.

He tries to speak...But he can't.

FADE TO BLACK

IN THE QUIETUS OF NIGHT...

Like a drowsy infant, ALITHEA lifts her heavy eyelids to check if he's still there...

He is.

Looking at her tenderly.

She smiles, and drifts back into sleep.

FADE TO BLACK

WE MAY REMEMBER...

The image of ALITHEA packing the photo album of her marriage into a box marked STORAGE...Now, she does the same with the Djinn's clothes - neatly folded.

She stores the BOX in THE BASEMENT.

FADE TO BLACK

A CAPTION

THREE YEARS LATER...

ALITHEA SITS ON A BENCH IN A BUSY PARK.

She has a fountain pen and - in sepia ink - is sketching in a leather-bound journal. She puts the finishing touches to a DIAGRAM explaining the stages of the DJINN'S EMERGENCE from the BOTTLE - *invisible, gaseous, vaporous, particulate, organic*. (We may remember seeing the animated version of this drawing during the Zefir sequence).

She is interrupted by LAUGHTER...

Beyond her, OUT OF FOCUS, a COUPLE of YOUNG LOVERS are trying out roller-blades for the first time. They flop down on a park bench and canoodle.

ALITHEA goes back to her journal, riffling to the last pages - where we see that she has written the narration we heard earlier...

...in the Realm of Djinn - they tell each other stories.

Stories are like breath to them.

They make meaning...

Now, also OUT OF FOCUS, someone APPROACHES her from BEHIND.

It is a SMALL CHILD - perhaps two years old.

THE CHILD
 (softly)
 Mummy...Mummy?

As ALITHEA turns to look...

We see the BLURRED IMAGE of a FATHER pick up the child and move out of frame.

FATHER
 Mummy's not here, Sweet.

Now, ALITHEA flicks to the opening page of her journal where we see the title...

THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF LONGING, and the narration that began this story...

*My name is Alithea. My story is true.
 You're more likely to believe me, however,
 if I tell it as a fairy tale.*

As she did years before with Enzo the imaginary school boy and, later, her ex-husband, she has made a JOURNAL of The Djinn.

She snaps it shut, sheathes the fountain pen, and sets off walking through the park.

NOW...CAMERA CONVERGES ON HER FROM SEVERAL DISRUPTIVE ANGLES.

From ABOVE. From the LEFT. From the RIGHT.

And from BEHIND.

She stops.

Sensing a presence.

She turns, and there, approaching from across the park, is...

THE DJINN. (He is wearing a long coat, and hoodie.)

SHE GAZES at him - her face betraying no emotion.

She CLOSES HER EYES and begins a count to 'three'.

Before she finishes, his SHADOW falls on her.

When she opens her eyes...

He is there. Right in front of her.

They embrace.

We watch as they walk off - arm in arm.

A young man kicks a SOCCER BALL. Hard.

It bounces off a lamp post, and hits THE DJINN on the shoulder...

He recovers the ball, and skillfully kicks it back.

It ricochets off the post and bounces straight into the arms of the Soccer Player...

...who acknowledges him, with an apologetic wave and a laugh.

ALITHEA and THE DJINN continue on their way...

To the casual observer, they are just another couple in love...

THE NARRATOR ALITHEA
*He would visit from time to time
and they would grasp each vivid moment.
Despite the pain of the raucous skies,
he always stayed longer than he should;
long after she begged him to leave.
He promised to return in her lifetime.
And for her, that was more than enough.*

FADE TO BLACK