

## Genie-us

'If you want to marry my daughter,' said the king, 'you must prove yourself worthy of her hand.'

'Anything!' cried the poor young man. 'I love the princess, and I will brave any peril for her!'

The princess stood behind the throne, crying. 'Right then,' said the king. 'You must climb to the top of the Ice Mountain, and fetch the magic lamp that a wicked rival stole from me.'

'I'll do it!' the young man declared, and rushed from the throne room.

The king chuckled. 'That's fixed him! The cheek of it - poor as a church mouse, and weedy too, and he thinks he's good enough to marry my daughter! Well, *he* won't be back!'

The princess was still crying.

The young man might have been poor and weedy, but his love for the princess gave him courage. He struggled up the freezing, slippery slopes of the Ice Mountain. And he found the wicked rival's hideaway, where the magic lamp was hidden. (Luckily, the rival was away at the time.)

Holding the lamp, he wondered what sort of magic it could do. You were supposed to rub magic lamps, weren't you? Well, then . . .

He rubbed the lamp. And—*WHOOSH!* A cloud of purple smoke burst out, and a genie appeared. The genie was tall and handsome and proud. He said, 'Who are you?'

'I'm a poor young man who loves the princess. And when I take the magic lamp, with you in it, back to the king, he'll let me marry her,' said the young man happily.

'In your dreams!' snorted the genie. He reached out and grabbed the young man. 'I've been in that lamp for a hundred years, and I'm fed up with it! So you can take my place—in you go!'

And with another puff of smoke, the young man vanished into the lamp.

The genie picked up the lamp, grabbed a magic carpet that was rolled up in a corner, and told it to take him to the palace.

'I've brought your lamp,' he announced as he strode into the throne room. 'It isn't magic any more. But I am. And I claim your daughter's hand in marriage!'

The king looked at the genie. Tall and handsome, and magic, too! 'That's more like it!' he said, and turned to the princess, 'Daughter, this is your future husband!'

The princess stopped crying. 'Oh, goody!' she said. 'I was so afraid I'd have to marry that poor, weedy creep instead!'