

WISHES

By Craig Sodaro

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STORY OF THE PLAY

What's worse than missing a live concert by K.C. Reno, a hot music star, on a Friday night? How about being grounded WITH your younger sister and brother?

For high school senior Mary Jo Swanson, life couldn't look much bleaker. She and her sister, Tobie, and brother, Alexander, are grounded, maybe for life, if their widowed father's overbearing fiancée, Miss Erika Van Skivver, has anything to do about it. At the very least, she plans to send the two girls off to boarding school and fire the family housekeeper.

The kids almost wish something bad would happen to Miss Van Skivver before the big engagement party the next night. Their neighbor Christine, who's catering the party, would be a much better match for their dad - and them!

By a quirky twist of fate, the kids are given three wishes by a genie trapped in a bottle that's just been stolen from the art museum. They soon learn you have to be careful what you wish, for it may come true! Their first wish brings K.C. Reno right into their living room, but the singer is so dazed all he can croak out is, "I've Been Working on the Railroad."

Their second wish plunks high school heart-throb Reggie Lamont into the throes of deepest puppy love for Mary Jo. But he turns out to be an incredible pest when he won't stop following her around!

A wild assortment of crazy characters such as the star's angry agent, a lady gumshoe, an uptight headmistress, an outraged Miss Van Skivver, a very confused father, and a host of party guests scared silly by Alexander's pet snake, all make for a riotous conclusion when the Swanson kids make their third and most important wish.

CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast - approximately 9 M, 13 W, 1 Voice)

MARY JO SWANSON: 16, a shy high school student who spends her weekends reading Louisa May Alcott.

TOBIE SWANSON: 14, her hip younger sister who can really get herself into trouble.

ALEXANDER SWANSON: 12, their brother.

CHARLIE SWANSON: 47, their dad, a computer wizard who's had a tough time raising his children since the death of their mother.

HILDY PARKS: 60, their lottery-playing housekeeper, loved by the kids.

ERIKA VAN SKIVVER: 40, Charlie's colleague and fiancée. Highbrow, with definite plans for their future.

CHRISTINE ROBBINS: 38, the attractive caterer next door.

STICKY FINGERS FENTON (*Fast Freddie*): A local cat burglar.

K.C. RENO: 25, a big country star.

FIONA SCHLEPP: 30, K.C.'s New York agent.

REGGIE LAMONT: 18, the object of Mary Jo's secret affections.

POINDEXTER PAYNE: 17, Reggie's best friend.

SGT. DINGLE: Of the local police.

MISS LASKEY: Headmistress of a girls' finishing school.

HORACE CRAVEN: 60, owner, Craven Computer Consultants.

MYRNA SNOOKS: Craven's beautiful, but vaporous secretary.

ROSEANNE: 17, a friend of Mary Jo.

BETH: 17, another friend.

JULIE: 17, another friend.

CARLA: 17, still another, all fans of K.C. Reno.

GENIE: Ageless and timeless, a voice from a bottle. Never seen. Can be played by the principal or a teacher.

DOROTHY DANE: A lady gumshoe.

BRUNO: The strong, silent type.

EXTRAS: As adult guests at the party.

(The parts of Fenton, Schlepp, Dingle, and Genie may be male or female. A male playing Fenton could also double as Bruno, Poindexter, or Craven. A female playing Fenton could double as Myrna.)

THE SETTING

All the action takes place in the living room of the Swanson house. A front door UCL, an arch entrance DR and another DL allow for all entrances and exits. A couch and chair grouping are at CR. A table UL is set with several chairs, as a game table or homework table. DL are bookshelves and a secretary or perhaps a roll-top desk. A window UR emits light from outside through sheet draperies. A television sits low to the stage DR facing the couch, not the audience. If desired, a fireplace can be added DR, along with any other decorations that will make the home look lived-in and well-cared-for.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties: Featherduster, walkman with earphones, paper, pencil, skeleton key, long-necked blue bottle, two starter guns; large book; several serving trays set with canapes or hors d'oeuvres; newspaper; and contract.

For party: candles; vase of flowers including a red rose; punch bowl and cups; optional cake; press card; large rubber snake; two neckties; autograph; nut dish; candy and bouquet of flowers; club; extra clothes and shoes for fight between K.C. and Reggie in Act II; Arabian Nights style lamp.

Costumes: Contemporary dress. Characters will have to change for the party between Acts I and II. K.C. needs western style clothes, including a green jacket. Fenton wears dark clothes, hat and mask; Dorothy wears trenchcoat and fedora; Dingle wears a uniform. In Scene 2, Erika has snow on her coat.

Special Effects: Use a mike for the Genie's voice. If a voice-distorter is available, it will be very effective. Also, flashing lights or a strobe will be effective for the scene when the Genie comes out of the bottle. A pin spot for the Genie, who flies about the room like Tinkerbell, would be very effective.

Sound Effects: Effects include TV music and announcer; gun shot; thud; glass tinkling; door knocks; the song, "I've Been Working on the Railroad"; and fight sounds.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: HILDY dusts the furniture while MARY JO and TOBIE sit on the couch, bored, their elbows resting on their knees, their heads in their hands. Hildy is listening to her walkman and absent-mindedly dusts Mary Jo.)

MARY JO: Hildy! I'm not a piece of furniture! Hildy!
(MARY JO lifts one earphone of the walkman.)

HILDY: Hey! They're just about to announce the winner.
Get these numbers down!

TOBIE: *(Grabbing pencil and paper.)* Shoot, Hildy!

HILDY: 26, 7, 8, 14, 35.

MARY JO: Well, how'd you do?

HILDY: *(Excitedly.)* How should I know? I've got forty-two lotto tickets to check, so if you hear a scream that shatters glass, you'll know I won. If you don't, leave me alone. I'll be despondent till next week. *(Moves to exit.)*

TOBIE: *(Tentatively.)* I don't suppose there's any chance we can get out of the house tonight...

HILDY: Not if you intend to live long.

TOBIE: *(Disappointedly.)* Well, it isn't fair! K. C. Reno's only in town one night and our tickets were in the tenth row!

MARY JO: *(Resigned.)* Tobie...we've been all over this already with Dad.

HILDY: That's right. You'll just have to listen to your K.C. Reno tapes tonight and stare at his poster! You had no business putting salt in Miss Van Skivver's tea. Either of you. No matter how much she deserves it!

TOBIE: There, you see? If you were us, you'd have done the same thing.

HILDY: Oh, girls. *(SHE moves in and sits on the couch.)* If I could have just one wish...do you know what it would be? It would be for your mother to be back here with you now. Then there wouldn't be any Miss Van Skivver...any salt in her tea...any wedding coming up...and any grounding.

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MARY JO: (*Bitterly.*) It's stupid to wish for things like that because they won't come true.

HILDY: No. It's not stupid to wish and hope, Mary Jo. Those you can always do as long as they don't hurt anyone. And all that salt on top of Miss Van Skivver's ulcer could have sent the poor woman to the hospital.

TOBIE: Ha! The only hospital that would admit her would be an animal hospital.

HILDY: You girls are just going to have to make the best of this all...somehow.

MARY JO: You don't like Miss Van Skivver, do you?

HILDY: I'm not the one marrying her.

TOBIE: But you're going to have to work for her.

HILDY: Now you know why I HAVE to win the lottery, right?

MARY JO: And if you were us, Hildy, what would you do?

HILDY: (*Rising.*) I would have used Tabasco sauce and not gotten caught.

TOBIE: That was all Alexander's fault! Miss Van Skivver paid him ten bucks to turn us in!

(*ALEXANDER enters SR, then stops short, frightened.*)

MARY JO: Well, if it isn't Benedict Arnold.

ALEXANDER: Who's he?

TOBIE: A traitor. And do you know what happens to traitors?

ALEXANDER: Can't be too bad. They named Eggs Benedict after this Arnold fellow, didn't they?

TOBIE: (*Advancing on HIM.*) Sure. It was his last meal!!

ALEXANDER: (*Backing SR.*) Ah, Hildy...you weren't really thinking about going to bingo tonight, were you?

HILDY: How else can I pay the rent? Now you three be good, and if you can't be good, don't get caught. There's a whole batch of chocolate chip cookies in the cookie jar.

ALEXANDER: Oh, were those for tonight?

TOBIE: Don't tell me you ate them all?!

ALEXANDER: I only had a couple. Sherlock ate the rest.

MARY JO: How you can sleep in the same room with that python, I'll never know! He's so slithery and slimy.

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