

# PERUSAL SCRIPT

## Jinn

A One-Act Play

by

Mahonri Stewart



Newport, Maine

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**JINN**

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*For my friend Rachel Baird Lockhart,*  
who asked for it. Thank you for believing in my work.

*Also for my friend Rebecca Minson.*  
For two productions of “Jinn,” she has embodied Calypso exquisitely.

## **PRODUCTION HISTORY:**

*Zion Theatre Company premiered “Jinn” on November 18, 2011, as part of the set of short plays called Jinn and Other Myths, in conjunction with the Off Broadway Theatre in Salt Lake City, Utah. It performed with the following cast and crew:*

### **CAST**

*Calypso:* Rebecca Minson  
*Shopkeeper:* Jason Kelly Fullmer  
*Jinn 1:* Luci McNair  
*Jinn 2:* Shea Potter

### **CREW**

*Director:* Jyllian Petrie Unice  
*Multimedia Directors:* Jason Sullivan, Joel Petrie  
*Producers:* Nathaniel Drew, Mahonri Stewart  
*Lights:* David Bellis  
*Sound:* Joel Petrie

“Jinn” then performed again at the Off Broadway Theatre in Salt Lake City starting on August 18, 2012, as part of Zion Theatre Company’s set of short plays *The Death of Eurydice and Other Short Plays*. It had the following cast and crew:

### **CAST**

*Calypso:* Rebecca Minson  
*Shopkeeper:* Michelle Markland  
*Jinn 1:* Rachel Baird  
*Jinn 2:* Lawrence Fernandez

### **CREW**

*Creative Director:* Rachel Baird  
*Technical Director:* David Bellis  
*Lighting Design:* Brittany Restrepo  
*Producers:* Mahonri Stewart, Penny Pendleton, Nathaniel Drew, Rachel Baird  
*Original Music and Sound Design:* Nathaniel Drew

“Jinn” then performed starting on May 3, 2011, at Arizona State University as Kendra Schroeder’s capstone project. It performed with the following cast and crew:

### **CAST**

*Calypso:* Sydney Weinberger  
*Shopkeeper:* Imran Malik  
*Jinn 1:* Victoria Murray  
*Jinn 2:* Michael Bowler

### **CREW**

*Director:* Kendra Schroeder  
*Sound and Lighting Design:* Noelle Nichols  
*Set and Costume Designer:* Thomas Uderal

**CAST OF CHARACTERS** — (4) 2 f, 1m, 1 either

**Shopkeeper** — can be female or male

**Calypso** — a young woman

**Jinn 1** — female

**Jinn 2** — male

**JINN** by Mahonri Stewart Cast of 4 (2f, 1m, 1 either) 30 minutes. To avoid the emotions of her life—even the joys—Calypso explores shops in the search for trinkets, outfits, and nonsense. However, one day she discovers a mysterious shop that was more than she was bargained for, as she acquires a colored bottle that contains a Jinn—a repressed spirit—that reveals to her just how much damage she has done on her emotional life. Premiered by Zion Theatre Company at the Off Broadway Theatre in Salt Lake City, 2011.

**ORDER # 3316**

**Mahonri Stewart** is an award winning writer and educator. He has written over two dozen plays, most of which have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe, including productions in Los Angeles, Scotland, and Switzerland. In 2004, his premiere play *Farewell to Eden* won the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's National Playwriting Award (Second Place) and their National Selection Team Fellowship Award. Since then he has also received numerous other awards and honors and continues to expand his writing into various mediums, including screenplays, graphic novels, poetry, and novels. He received his MFA degree in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University, where he wrote both the stage version of *Jimmy Stewart Goes to Hollywood*, as well as a screenplay version. He received his Bachelors degree in Theatre Arts from Utah Valley University. He's a former Playwright in Residence at the Noorda Regional Theater for Children and Youth.

**REVIEW EXCERPTS:**

"It is cathartic to experience a play like Zion Theatre Company's portrayal of Mahonri Stewart's Jinn and Other Myths. This performance does not just entertain, but also challenges you to analyze the artistic material and also yourself." — **Jocelyn Gibbons**, *Utah Theatre Bloggers Association*

"It's a powerful commentary on us as a society and as individuals. Her challenge is ours and ultimately it becomes a rather ironic question of self-determination. Do we face our past mistakes, grapple with the grief, and become better people for it? Or do we bottle it all up and, in so doing, let those mistakes control our lives while we ourselves remain broken? The question is almost too easy to answer, but the play artfully captures the human elements that make it so hard for Calypso (and symbolically us as a society) to make the healthy choice. Facing one's mistakes is a very punishing process emotionally, and even after Calypso makes her choice, I was none too certain that I would have had her courage." — **Hillary Stirling**, *A Motley Vision*

## Jinn

*A shop. On the shelves are many, many glass bottles of all different kinds of colors, shapes and sizes. The shop is full of them, almost bursting. As a collective, they are quite beautiful and when hit by the light they cast colorful shadows on the ground and against the walls. The entire setting of the show happens in the shop. The SHOPKEEPER is organizing this menagerie of glass beauty when CALYPSO enters and starts inspecting the bottles. These two characters can be placed in a myriad of times, a myriad of places, they can modern or period, or perhaps even be made to be timeless.*

**CALYPSO:** These are beautiful. What a unique shop.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Thank you.

**CALYPSO:** I love the elegant sense you give to something as pragmatic as a bottle. You do make these yourself, don't you?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Me? Heavens, no.

**CALYPSO:** Oh. That's a shame. I thought you might have the look of a glassblower.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Not nearly so interesting as all that. Just the Shopkeeper.

**CALYPSO:** I see. Just the Shopkeeper.

**SHOPKEEPER:** And you are Calypso.

**CALYPSO:** How did you ... ?

**SHOPKEEPER:** I know everyone's names, as soon as they enter my shop.

**CALYPSO:** No, really, how did you ... ?

**SHOPKEEPER:** You've been here before.

**CALYPSO:** No, I would remember a place as beautiful as . . .

*(SHOPKEEPER goes to a particular bottle, grabs it and places it before CALYPSO.)*

Wait.

**SHOPKEEPER:** I told you.

**CALYPSO:** Why do I remember this bottle?

**SHOPKEEPER:** It belongs to you.

**CALYPSO:** Oh, I didn't say I was going to buy anything ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** It's already yours.

**CALYPSO:** That's generous of you, but ...

*(The SHOPKEEPER goes to another bottle and brings it to CALYPSO.)*

**SHOPKEEPER:** And this one has just come in for you.

**CALYPSO:** No, really, I couldn't ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** It's not a matter of could or couldn't, it's a matter of fact. I keep them here for you.

**CALYPSO:** You say they're already mine?

**SHOPKEEPER:** They most certainly are.

**CALYPSO:** Well, if you're *really* giving them to me, then I certainly don't want to keep them *here*.

**SHOPKEEPER:** I'm just following your previous instructions.

**CALYPSO:** I mean this one would look great in my kitchen. And this one, well, with some red flowers, it would be ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** You're not understanding.

**CALYPSO:** Can you wrap them up for me? It'd be a shame, if they broke. They really are most enchanting. Thank you for the gifts, they're perfect.

**SHOPKEEPER:** I said you're not understanding.

**CALYPSO:** Really, how do you stay in business, if you just give them away?

**SHOPKEEPER:** The bottles are irrelevant.

**CALYPSO:** I definitely wouldn't say that! I am a big believer in the power of beauty.

**SHOPKEEPER:** It's what is in the bottle that really matters.

**CALYPSO:** But they don't have anything in them.

**SHOPKEEPER:** They do.

**CALYPSO:** They don't even have any corks or bottle stoppers.

**SHOPKEEPER:** The bottles themselves are sufficient to contain what's inside.

**CALYPSO:** If you're going to tell me that you're bottling air, well, that's just idiotic. Don't even try to sell me the air.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Calypso, you don't understand.

**CALYPSO:** What don't I understand?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Now you're getting somewhere.

**CALYPSO:** What don't I understand?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Here, hold this one.

*(SHOPKEEPER hands the first bottle to CALYPSO. CALYPSO is caught off guard when she touches the bottle and reacts almost as if she had water thrown in her face. She quickly places the bottle down.)*

**CALYPSO:** What just happened?

**SHOPKEEPER:** It'll be easier if you tell me.

**CALYPSO:** There was such intense emotion—all sorts of emotions— they just rushed through me like ... like ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** I know the words are hard to find.

**CALYPSO:** Are there words for this? This is beyond my experience.

**SHOPKEEPER:** It is not beyond your experience.

**CALYPSO:** I'm starting to remember this place—vaguely. Like a dream you almost remember when you wake up—but then it fades ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** As soon as one leaves this store, the memory of it is hard to hold. You look pale, have a seat.

**CALYPSO:** What is in those bottles?

**SHOPKEEPER:** The Jinn.

**CALYPSO:** The what?

**SHOPKEEPER:** The Jinn. At least that's the word in Arabic. You would know them better as genies.

**CALYPSO:** Genies? As in Aladdin's genie?

**SHOPKEEPER:** No, not like the storytellers have fabricated them.

**CALYPSO:** So if I rub that bottle, will one of these Jinn grant my wishes?

**SHOPKEEPER:** No, at least not in the way you are thinking. But they certainly are connected to your wishes—and desires.

**CALYPSO:** Why are you being so cryptic? Please, just talk plainly with me.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Nothing is "plain" here. All is shadow and colored light.

**CALYPSO:** Where am I? I just wanted to distract myself and do some shopping.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Distract yourself from what?

**CALYPSO:** I—well, what do you mean?

**SHOPKEEPER:** What are you trying to distract yourself from?

**CALYPSO:** Well, I didn't say it was anything in particular. You know how it is, I am certain you have lots of people walk through those doors.

**SHOPKEEPER:** I certainly do.

**CALYPSO:** I hope it doesn't sound superficial, but I really enjoy shopping. It's not so much about the *things*, you know. It's about the experience.

**SHOPKEEPER:** The experience.

**CALYPSO:** I enjoy all sorts of stores, whether it's an open flea market or an expensive dress shop. Oh, and little, eclectic stores like this— pawn shops, second hand places, specialty stores with little trinkets or knick knacks or—or foreign items! An elephant tusk or a porcelain figurine or an old sword—it's the experience of it all! The more foreign the better, I think. And to be surrounded by so many people!

**SHOPKEEPER:** Yes, so many people doing their shopping.

**CALYPSO:** Of course. It's movement and bustle and haggling and— well, don't you see? They're these little interactions, bumping into each other, thumbing through sales together, money crossing hands, the small talk among merchants and customers ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** Do you always go alone?

*(CALYPSO stops in her train of thought and looks at the SHOPKEEPER, a little stunned. She stumbles with her thoughts for a little bit.)*

**CALYPSO:** Alone?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Yes, you're alone.



**CALYPSO:** Well, you're here with me.

**SHOPKEEPER:** But do you have any companions who come with you? Friends? A husband, children?

**CALYPSO:** No. No, I don't have anyone like that.

**SHOPKEEPER:** And so you go shopping.

**CALYPSO:** No, no, you're misinterpreting all of it.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Am I?

**CALYPSO:** All of those—those kinds of relationships—well, when you come home from a hard day, you don't just want to get into another fight, or deal with all of the crying and yelling. Or devote all your energy to someone who is starved for attention or, worse yet, be the one starved for attention. I mean, when you're already at your wits' end, what's the point of all that?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Indeed.

**CALYPSO:** Now I'm going to sound a little strange here, but hear me out. People say they want these deep relationships, these—these intimate relationships where you can finish each other's sentences and almost read each other's thoughts. Well, excuse me for liking my privacy, but that's all a little—well, it's all a little *exposed* for my tastes.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Exposed?

**CALYPSO:** Exposed. Vulnerable. Just out in the open like that. Who really wants that kind of life?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Apparently, you don't.

**CALYPSO:** No. I don't. But listen to me just carrying on! Chatter, chatter, chatter, noise, noise, noise ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** ... bustle, bustle, bustle, shop, shop, shop.

**CALYPSO:** Stop it.

**SHOPKEEPER:** I apologize. You wouldn't want to *expose* yourself, of course.

**CALYPSO:** I said stop it! Look, we're way off topic. The bottles. Such pretty bottles.

**SHOPKEEPER:** Yes. Hold this one.

*(SHOPKEEPER offers her the second bottle. CALYPSO hesitates.)*

**CALYPSO:** Just box them up for me, won't you?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Just hold it.

*CALYPSO looks at the bottle, frightened now, but she draws in a big breath and takes the bottle from the SHOPKEEPER. Her reaction is even more intense this time, although maybe not as animated, but she doesn't let go of it as quickly.)*

**CALYPSO:** Oh! Oh—this one is so sad. But so beautiful . . .

*(CALYPSO starts to struggle with the intense emotion, wanting to hold on, but eventually she can't and thrusts it back into the SHOPKEEPER's hands.)*

I can't! I'm sorry, but I can't! Why don't you show me some more of these bottles? Maybe one which is a little more cheerful. A bright and dainty bottle would do nicely, maybe one that I can put perfume in. Can I put perfume in it, if it already has a genie in residence? I keep forgetting that something lives in them. Don't want to drown the little creatures. In fact, I'm so taken with your little Jinn, maybe I can

make a collection. I collect oh so many things ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** Calypso ...

**CALYPSO:** In fact, do you do exchanges? I'm not sure I'm really satisfied with the two Jinn you gave me. I would be more than happy to ...

**SHOPKEEPER:** Calypso, those two bottles are yours and no one else's.

**CALYPSO:** Well, then I'll just have to get more then, won't I? Build up that collection! I'll become your most loyal customer!

**SHOPKEEPER:** You have other bottles here, Calypso, but those two are the most prominent, the most important. These ones on the shelves, they belong to others. But these—these are your Jinn. They are yours to do what you want with. But I will warn you that if you leave this shop with them, the Jinn will escape from the bottles permanently.

**CALYPSO:** What do you mean escape?

**SHOPKEEPER:** Within the shop, the Jinn can be brought out of the bottle and you can look at them, admire them, despise them, laugh at them—whatever you want. But in that open air, the bottles lose their magic. And once the Jinn are free, they have a life of their own. They have their own wills that alter our lives in unseen ways. Every customer receives this warning—you can free the Jinn, you can be their liberator. But mischief will follow.

**CALYPSO:** Mischief! What kind of evil thing have you given me?

**SHOPKEEPER:** The Jinn are not always evil. Actually, they often can be very good and virtuous—but they are also not orderly. No Jinn, in any way, is predictable. Especially once they are free, don't ever think that you can control them.

**CALYPSO:** Really, Shopkeeper, this may be a little more responsibility than I was bargaining for.

**SHOPKEEPER:** These are your Jinn. You are now their master in this place. Do with them as you will. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some cataloguing to do in the back.

**CALYPSO:** Shopkeeper!

*(SHOPKEEPER exits. CALYPSO looks at the two bottles warily. Growing more and more nervous, she turns and nearly exits the entire shop, but then looks back at the bottles. Curiosity starts to consume her as she turns and stares at the bottles. Progressively, WHISPERS are heard, perhaps even seductive or enchanting MUSIC, perhaps even with a Middle Eastern feel to it. CALYPSO is startled at first, but the whispers somehow make sense to her and she approaches the bottles. There is still some hesitation as she circles the bottles, inspecting them. The music grows more lush and enticing until CALYPSO can't withhold any longer and she grabs the first bottle. The music stops and nothing happens. She taps the bottle.)*

**CALYPSO:** Well, that was anti-climactic.

*(Suddenly there is an exceptionally loud BLARING SOUND and the LIGHTS FLASH on brightly. There is a sudden blackout. After several moments, the lights slowly rise again to reveal CALYPSO still in the shop, but now accompanied by the FIRST JINN. This JINN is veiled, wrapped head to toe, possibly in an Islamic burqa, or a perhaps a hijab that also veils the face. The clothing is possibly black, but more likely brightly colored, possibly the same color as the bottle it just emerged from.)*

Wow. Er, hello.

*(The FIRST JINN's eyes widen in surprise. She is wary of CALYPSO.)*

Don't worry, I ...

*(CALYPSO tries to draw near to the FIRST JINN, but the JINN withdraws, growing ever more suspicious.)*

No, you don't have to ...

**FIRST JINN:** Stay back.

**CALYPSO:** So you can speak.

*(The JINN still lingers back.)*

I'm not going to hurt you.

**FIRST JINN:** Liar.

**CALYPSO:** Please . . .

**FIRST JINN:** Liar!

*(CALYPSO goes forward and tries to grab the FIRST JINN's hand. The FIRST JINN slaps it away. CALYPSO attempts to grab the hand again and this time holds on, even as the FIRST JINN struggles against her touch. CALYPSO then grabs the FIRST JINN's other hand, making a soothing "Shh" sounds. Their eyes lock and the FIRST JINN relaxes a bit, but she is still more than a little afraid.)*

**CALYPSO:** See?

**FIRST JINN:** What do you want?

**CALYPSO:** I'm—curious.

**FIRST JINN:** About me?

**CALYPSO:** Yes.

*(The FIRST JINN struggles again. CALYPSO holds on.)*

Trust me.

**FIRST JINN:** No.

**CALYPSO:** Please ...

**FIRST JINN:** I don't know you. You don't know me. There is nothing to trust.

**CALYPSO:** Then let's get to know each other. Then we'll see.

*(The FIRST JINN considers this. CALYPSO drops her hands. The FIRST JINN creates just a little bit of comfortable distance, but is still willing to engage with CALYPSO.)*

There's nothing to fear.

**FIRST JINN:** You're naive. But—familiar.

**CALYPSO:** Why—why do you wear that?

**FIRST JINN:** Why do you?

**CALYPSO:** Do you like the outfit? The bottom is from an expensive shop I like to go to a few streets over from my home—the top, though, that's my prize. Second hand store. You would never be able to tell, would you?

**FIRST JINN:** No.

**CALYPSO:** Don't want to be too predictable, do we? Combine the cheap and the sublime and then don't let anyone tell the difference! Keep them off balance, keep them guessing, keep up the mystery.

**FIRST JINN:** Yes. That's it.

**CALYPSO:** We can't expose ourselves, can we?

**FIRST JINN:** Yes. You understand.

**CALYPSO:** Yes. I do.

*(They connect. The FIRST JINN draws closer.)*

**FIRST JINN:** What's it like? Out there?

*(They both look to the door.)*

**CALYPSO:** Tolerable. If you know what you're doing.

**FIRST JINN:** And if you don't?

**CALYPSO:** Then you might as well stay here.

**FIRST JINN:** I see.

**CALYPSO:** Isolation. It's not always so bad, is it?

**FIRST JINN:** Isn't it?

**CALYPSO:** They think it's a big punishment, that. Solitary confinement. But I bet your thoughts are interesting. Alone with your thoughts like that, it must be nice, not having everyone pressing in on you.

**FIRST JINN:** I don't know. I don't have anything else to compare it to except being here now with you.

**CALYPSO:** And your bottle. How pretty it is.

**FIRST JINN:** Is it?

**CALYPSO:** Look. The bright color, the elegant formation. To some, this may seem decently common. But to me—well, I know these things. I know cheap junk and I know—a treasure.

**FIRST JINN:** A treasure.

**CALYPSO:** Yes! And you should treasure it as well.

**FIRST JINN:** I will. It's the only home I have.

**CALYPSO:** Home. There's something about home, isn't there? The safe place, where you go to when it's become too loud outside. Too tumultuous.

*(The FIRST JINN begins to become emotional, a deep seated sadness coming upon her.)*

Oh, dearie, what's wrong?

**FIRST JINN:** I—I don't know.

*(The FIRST JINN begins to cry and collapses to the floor.)*

You—you shouldn't see me like this.

**CALYPSO:** Maybe you're right. I'll leave you to your privacy. Maybe this was all a mistake.

*(CALYPSO turns to go, but then looks back with a good deal of pity. She goes to the FIRST JINN and kneels next to her.)*

**FIRST JINN:** No, really, you should ...

*(CALYPSO takes the FIRST JINN's hand. CALYPSO, surprised, takes in a strong, shocked breath.)*

**CALYPSO:** I can—I can—how can I feel your pain? It's so strong ...

**FIRST JINN:** You don't want to understand.

**CALYPSO:** No! Tell me, tell me, please . . .

**FIRST JINN:** Tell *you*? Tell my jail keeper!

*(The FIRST JINN rises in a terrible fury.)*

**10 more pages to the end of the script**