

ALL DONE BY MAGIC

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A one-act comedy

by

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Characters

<i>Alice</i>	<i>Mid 30s</i>
<i>Harry</i>	<i>Alice's uncle, a little over 60</i>
<i>Lance</i>	<i>Late 30s</i>
<i>Rick</i>	<i>Early 40s</i>
<i>Julie/Juliet</i>	<i>Mid 20s</i>

Scene 1

A room in a hut; sparsely furnished with just two chairs and a table. One chair stands in front and to the right of a table, on which there is a laptop computer, the remote control for a video recorder, a mobile phone, a wizard's hat, a small doll, a pin cushion and a glass. A stack of books is piled on the floor at the back. Stage left is a curtain which covers an entrance from another room and, downstage from this is another chair with a slatted back. Stage right is a door leading outside.

It is a dull afternoon in early autumn, and the room, lit from an imaginary window on the audience side, is rather gloomy. As the scene opens, the room is empty. Alice opens the door and calls in.

Alice Is there anyone here?
 No response. She calls again.
 Hell-o!
 Harry comes out from behind the curtain
Harry Are you looking for me? Oh, it's you, my little Alice.
Alice Yes, hello Uncle Harry. I've had an awful job finding you.
Harry Well, you're here now, so come in.
Alice *(Closes the door, comes over and kisses him on the cheek)* Why are you
 here, in this little hut in the forest, up a dirt track and miles from the village?
Harry So people don't come bothering me. It's my refuge.
Alice Oh! Well, I need your help.
Harry Then you'd better sit down.
Alice Thanks. *(She sits down and he sits opposite her)*
Harry Nice to see you, Alice. How are you? Still working in the city, commuting
 every day?
Alice No, I've given that up. On a particularly tiresome day, I suddenly thought:
 Why am I doing this? So I started searching the local papers, and I was
 lucky enough to find a job nearby. Not the most exciting, and my social life
 has taken a nose dive, but I'm sure it's better for me.
Harry As long as you're happy, that's what matters.
Alice Well, I would be, but... there's a small problem and I think you're just the
 right person to help me.
Harry Gladly, if I can.
Alice I've heard - is it true? That you've become a wizard.
Harry Well, I'm not that far yet. I'm still learning the basics. Making potions, that
 kind of thing. Oh, I know people have been making fun of it all down in the
 village. They call me mad Harry Hatter.
Alice Well, a wizard is just what I need if it means spells and things.
Harry As I say, I'm not all that advanced yet. It's a complicated business, and it
 doesn't help that the wizards' society has just begun to computerise

ALL DONE BY MAGIC

everything. They're still having to iron out the bugs in the system. Sometimes they're even real ones. Anyway, at the moment, I'm learning to harness sidereal magnetism to support psychokinetic powers.

Alice Excuse me – what was that again?

Harry Ah! The principle is, we all have this force flowing through us which goes beyond ourselves, but very few people are actually aware of this hidden strength.

Alice I'm sure I'm not.

Harry A pity, because if you train it, you can do amazing things. In theory. Although so far it's not helping my most pressing problem.

Alice *You've* got a problem, Uncle Harry?

Harry Yes. My little corner of the world is under threat. The owner of this patch of woodland is in financial difficulties, so he's got to sell it. And I'm told it's going to be bought by a housing group who, along with a team of architects, are planning to cut down all the trees and build a high class retirement complex on the hillside.

Alice Surely you can go somewhere else?

Harry I can... but the trees can't. So I have to stop this development.

Alice Quite right. I'm not in favour of developers eating up the countryside. Although, if you succeed, it probably just means they'll go and find some other patch of woodland to clear.

Harry Well, I can't fight everything. (*He looks at the laptop screen, takes up a small doll from the table and sticks a pin into it*) And what's your problem?

Alice You see, it's like this... I'm missing that special person, the one great love of my life.

Harry That could be because he doesn't exist.

Alice But I'm sure he does! And I want to experience that moment when he smiles at me across a crowded room and my heart leaps because I know this is the guy I've been waiting for.

Harry And that's it?

Alice Basically, yes.

Harry You want someone to smile at you across a crowded room?

Alice (*Sighs*) Well, to be honest, it's a bit more specific. I want a certain person to fall hopelessly in love with me and tell me that I'm the most wonderful person in the world. Namely Rick.

Harry Aha! Now it makes more sense. And who's he?

Alice A friend introduced me to him at a party. He was with a group of people, so I didn't get a chance to talk to him alone, but I haven't been able to stop thinking about him since. He's on his way to becoming a famous architect.

Harry Oh? As you can imagine, I'm not very fond of architects at the moment.

Alice No, but he's not likely to be the one that's involved in this development here, is it? That's sure to be an older man.

Harry And he didn't ask to see you again?

Alice Unfortunately, no, but as I say, he was there with a whole crowd of people, so he didn't really get a chance.

Harry My advice is to forget him and find someone else.

Alice No, I can't. I'm sure he's the one who's meant for me. My other half.

ALL DONE BY MAGIC

Harry Alice, I hate to disillusion you, but from what you've told me there's no evidence that he seems to think so.

Alice Not yet, it's true, but surely there's a chance he could suddenly realise that our destinies are intertwined... After that, life will be wonderful.

Harry You can't seriously believe in this sentimental rubbish?

Alice Why not? Think of all the great love stories.

Harry Casablanca?

Alice Exactly.

Harry She leaves him. Gone with the Wind?

Alice Yes.

Harry He leaves her. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet?

Alice Yes.

Harry They end up dead.

Alice But...

Harry Relationships are governed by availability, by the laws of supply and demand. If rump steak is off the menu, you have to settle for something else - or go hungry. (*He sticks another pin into the doll*)

Alice Um, what are you doing?

Harry Sticking pins in an effigy of whoever it is that wants to cut down the trees and develop this site.

Alice Can't you find something a bit more sophisticated, in this computer age?

Harry This is sophisticated *and* computerised. The computer programme tells me where to stick the pins. It's like acupuncture in reverse: instead of curing pains, it brings them on. It's not life-threatening, mind you, just unpleasant.

Alice It doesn't look much like anybody in particular.

Harry That's true, since I'm dealing with more than one person: there's a housing development group involved, plus the architects they're working with.

Alice Why don't you get the local wildlife trust interested in this forest? Start an appeal.

Harry You mean, get people to contribute money? I don't want that. It's too much like charity. No, this is my problem, and I'm going to deal with it my way.

Alice Well, with all your magic, I would have thought you'd be able to find some better way of stopping him than that.

Harry Ah – but you see I'm working on it. I'm developing a secret weapon. A special fertiliser.

Alice What will that do?

Harry Everything grows like crazy, and within a week, there'll be an impenetrable jungle with reinforced, flame resistant trees. It'll be impossible to fell them.

Alice Well, if you can do that, what about me? There must be something you can do to help me.

Harry Look, I'm sorry, Alice, but I can't see the problem. There must be others who'll do for you.

Alice Not a hope. I mean, he'd have to be... Let's see... hum... tall and dark, kind, friendly, well-meaning, tender, easy-going, capable, intelligent and, of course, he must have a sense of humour, and...

Harry Well, look... (*He picks up the mobile phone and dials*) I'll just call up the amateur wizards' fellowship central computer and connect to the people

ALL DONE BY MAGIC

finding site. What were those criteria again? *(He types in some information and reads)*

Alice Well? What does it say?

Harry “No match found” - can you settle for a bit less?

Alice We seem to be coming up against a problem here.

Harry Yes, it’s called “real people”.

Alice You see, it has to be Rick. He’s really caught my fancy.

Harry Hum. There’s one thing I’d like to try. What if I bring him here by telepathic hypnosis and thought project him into a live movie scene with you? How about that?

Alice *(Getting up)* Could you? Yes, please! A situation like that should be just the thing to arouse his interest. Which film? How about “Casablanca”? That would be awfully romantic.

Harry Whatever you say. *(There are bleeps from the laptop as Harry carries out a dialogue with it)* Rick and Casablanca. I’ll have to put on my wizard’s hat and try and summon up enough sidereal magnetism to make it work. I can’t promise anything... *(He goes behind the table, puts on his hat, and takes up the remote control)* Right, here we go. *(Harry picks up the remote control and presses the start button. The stage darkens briefly, then the lights go up again brightly. Rick comes on, dressed in a heavy overcoat and fur hat, with two bar stools. He places them centre stage in front of the table behind which Harry is now standing, acting as bartender, drying imaginary glasses.)*

Rick Play it, Ivan - you know the one.
Sound of a Russian balalaika music

Harry *(Picking up the remote control)* Just a minute – What’s gone wrong here? It seems to be a bit of a mix-up. Right setting, wrong character. Looks like I’ve got “War and Peace” instead of “Casablanca”. I told you, I can’t work this magic properly yet.

Alice Oh please, try again.
Harry fiddles with the remote control. Rick goes out mechanically, the lights dim and the music stops.

Harry Right, another go, then. Hopefully with violins this time.
Sound of a few bars of “As time goes by” played on violins. Rick comes on again, minus hat and coat, and smartly dressed. He sits on the nearest stool sideways to the audience, leaning on the bar.

Rick Funny, a minute ago I could have sworn I was in St. Petersburg.
Alice wanders across dreamily and stands in front of the bar next to him

Alice Is this seat taken?

Rick *(Glancing at her briefly)* No.
Alice sits on the stool.

Alice I’ll have a glass of red wine.
Harry pours from an imaginary bottle into an imaginary glass and hands this to her. She takes it and turns to face the audience. A pause. Harry holds his hat and concentrates hard. Rick straightens up, turns on his stool to face the audience, and looks properly at Alice. The music stops abruptly and the lights go up a little. They gaze at one another for a moment.

ALL DONE BY MAGIC

Rick Why, hello! What strange twist of fate has brought me into this bar, in this town, at this moment? Hi! I'm Rick. What's your name?

Alice Alice.
All through the following dialogue, Harry is trying not to laugh

Rick Alice! Ah, what a beautiful name! It's like music!

Alice And Rick - so short and expressive.

Rick My world is standing on its head...

Alice Why does the day suddenly seem so bright?

Rick You appeared and I'm lost in space...

Alice Suddenly springtime's all around...

Rick The look of you sends me insane...

Alice A hundred violins are playing in my head...

Rick Like a doorbell my heart went 'ding dong'...

Alice I want to go dancing through the daisies...

Rick An angel's caught me in her gossamer web...

Alice Your sparkling eyes captivate me...

Rick I'm burning, burning, I'm on fire...

Alice I'm so happy I could fly...

Rick I can't tell my nose from my ear...

Alice This is the moment that's changed my life...

Rick The goddess Venus is mine, all mine...

Alice I must be wonderful 'cause somebody loves me...

Rick You're the rum in my pina colada...

Alice You're the dream I've been waiting for...

Rick Tell me you'll be mine until...
A mobile phone rings. Both Rick and Alice search frantically - he through his pockets and she through her bag

Harry Oh, it's mine. *(He finds it and switches it off)* Sorry about that. Carry on.

Rick Yes, right... Where were we?
Harry goes to the door stage right and opens it. A red glow is seen outside

Alice *(Turning to look)* What's that?

Harry It's a sunset. You're supposed to walk off into it.

Alice Of course! That's it! Then we'll live happily ever after. *(Violin music plays. They get up, taking one another by the hand)*

Rick I'll be yours until... until the sun turns into a big balloon...

Alice Yes! Until the sun turns into a big balloon...
They embrace. A knock at the door, then Julie comes in as Juliet, wearing what looks like a long flowing nightdress and holding a balloon with a smiling sun on it. Despite the romantic dress, she is a determined young woman. She stands stage right

Julie Anyone here seen Romeo?