

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 30

SAMHAIN

All Hallows Eve. The car's engine slowly dies. The thin headlights shine out onto the bare brick wall, the wan Moon overhead barely casting any light. The car door slowly opens. A green hand grips the frame, red nails tapping on the glass. A heavy black shawl drapes over the thin arm, a long black robe concealing the figure within. Copper red hair hangs past a lurid green face, nose hooked down over a thin-lipped mouth pulled tight, eyes of jet peering out. Another green hand reaches into the car. Long bony fingers close on a crumpled piece of black fabric, pulling it out. A quick shake and the crumpled black pointed hat unfurls. "Come on, Magic Boy." she swings the door shut, making sure the hat is on properly, straightening the stiff rim.

"Coming, dearest." he closes the door, brushing dust off the black tuxedo. A striped waistcoat is buttoned tight, a red cummerbund around his waist. He checks the red bow tie, and strokes his hand along the pencil black moustache on his top lip. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small disc and shakes it, placing the newly expanded top hat on his short black hair at a jaunty angle. "Shall we?"

They walk though the alley onto the main street, the lights flickering. The lights out the front of Mister E's are dim. A sign on the closed door reads 'Closed. Private party'. A chill autumn wind blows down the silent, empty street, carrying the loose pages of forgotten newspapers. He holds out his hand. She takes it, looking suspiciously. They walk up the steps. "So, now what? A secret knock on the door?"

"Nothing so mundane." and with that, keeping a tight hold of her hand, he walks straight through the solid wooden door.

She stares at her arm as it stretches into the wood. "Should have known this was going to be that kind of night." and she follows him through.

Immediately the silence of the street is shattered, voices coming from all angles, laughter spreading out. The night is banished in the warm glow of dozens of candles, many glowing within ornately carved pumpkins. Incense fills the air, mingling with a dozen perfumes. And standing in front of them stands a golden robot, his hands waving in exasperation, "...every year. Who are you supposed to be?"

"John Zatara. And this is Elfaba."

"Hi, Lisa. Peter, you know the rules: No magicians."

"I'm a super-hero. I debuted in the same comic as Superman."

"You're still a magician. No proper costume, no entry."

"No problem, Stu3P0." a cloud of smoke swirls up around him, and when it clears the tuxedo has gone, replaced by flowing blue silk pantaloons and slippers curling over at the toes. A wide white sash wraps around his waist, a golden hilted scimitar thrust through it, a lion roaring on the pommel. He stands with his arms crossed, his skin bronzed. A white turban wraps around his head, his black beard pulled into a sharp wedge. "Is that better?"

"Much. Dipping into the family tree?"

"Didn't see the harm. Where's Sarah?"

"Holding court over by the bar." he nods his head, arms still waving.

"And Grace?"

"She's upstairs sleeping."

"What about the noise?"

There's a slight whine of motors as Stuart turns towards her, "What noise? The sound doesn't get outside the bar. Never has. We could have Mötorhead and Black Sabbath trying to outdo each other and you'd hear a pin drop in the corridors. Helps keep complaints from the neighbours down."

"I'll bet. When you're done with the greeting, I'll get you a beer."

"Thanks." he turns to the tall muscular man coming through the door. A large, heavy iron hammer rests easily in one hand, red hair tumbling from his head and around his mouth, "Hello, Master Anton. Who've you come as?"

"Ich bin Donar."

"I see. I think I saw Stephan, sorry, Siegfried by the bar."

"Danke."

A mouse walks past Lisa, holding a wine glass in her hand, her bare tail swishing behind her, whiskers twitching. "Wow. That's a realistic costume."

Peter looks at the departing mouse, her tail swaying with her hips, "Probably not a costume anymore."

"Huh? What do you mean 'anymore'?"

"Oh, some people like to go overboard and buy a costume that turns them into whatever it's a costume of. That's probably one of Gambi's. It looks pretty high quality. I know Stu's costume's the same."

"What?"

"Oh, if you were daft enough to try and see inside Stu3P0 at the moment, you'd see all the electronics that make up a droid, rather than person in a suit."

"You're kidding."

"Nope. Some people take their costumes very seriously."

"So I see." she watches a skeleton dropping canapés into its mouth, watching them slide down his throat where, thankfully, they vanish. More traditional outfits also fill the space, ornate gowns, pirates and soldiers, and a gorilla, although it looks a little too like a real gorilla for her liking.

"There's a lot of people. I thought this was only for magic types."

"Oh, it is. But this is the major Samhain event in the UK. It's the one everyone tries to get to if they can."

"And Samhain's a big deal."

"You could say that. Christmas and New Year's in one with the opportunity to dress up outrageously and no one notices. The Salem and Vegas ones really go over the top with the costumes and debauchery."

"You didn't mention any debauchery earlier."

"I didn't, did I?" he reaches the bar as the skeleton topples over, the wolfman beside him holding a femur innocently in his mouth. "Not a Gambi. He's always more careful on the mental side of things." He turns to the bar, "Your Majesty."

Sarah beams behind the bar, an ornate gold crown encrusted with gems rests on her head, her hair elegantly sculpted around it. Her courtly gown is a simple crimson, her fingers bedecked by rings, a golden sceptre resting under one arm as the other pulls a pint from the tap. "Be with you in a minute." She places the beer on the bar, taking a wine glass and pouring from the same tap.

"I really should stop being surprised by things like that, shouldn't I?"

"Yes, you really should. Nice costume, by the way. Love that musical."

"And who've you come as?"

"Oh, myself."

"Huh?"

"You see before you Queen Saz the First, Monarch of All She Surveys, Empress of the House of Mister E, Consort of the Keeper of London, Fairest of Them All, Guardian of the Future Generation, Protector of Innocence and You'd Better Not Be Laughing About That, Peter, et-ceterah, et-ceterah, et-ceterah."

"No, your Majesty."

"So, what are you having?"

"Couple of Witches' Brew and some oil for Stu3P0."

"Witches' Brew?"

"Special Samhain Beer. Saz refuses to say what goes into it."

"No, I don't. I always tell you it contains the remains of those who displeased me. You just don't believe me."

"Only because he isn't in there."

"Yet. Pull another stunt like you did at the wedding and I might reconsider."

"Yes, Your Majesty. Thank you for your gracious mercy."

"On the other hand, he does play along so cutely."

"Well, there is that I suppose."

"And here you go, three Brews. You're now entrusted with making sure Stuart gets his."

"How much?"

"Ask Peter. He's done this before." she sweeps off down the bar for the next customer.

"Ok, Magic Boy. How much?"

"Nothing."

Lisa almost chokes on the beer, "Nothing?!" she gasps.

"Nothing." he confirms, "Well, we don't pay anything anyway. The tab is getting picked up, don't worry about E's profit margins."

"Who...?"

"The owner. SORM. The Conclave. Someone always picks up the tab."

"Cool." she takes a sip from the glass, "Man, that's good. Sharp and tangy. Can't quite place the flavour, though."

"There you are! Why didn't you come in costume, sis?"

"Oh, funny. What have you..." she turns, "what the hell are you dressed as?"

Carrie smiles, "Like it?" She absently, and quite deliberately, reaches up to play with the metallic red star covering one nipple. Apart from those stars, with the nubs of nipples peeking out at the centre, her swollen breasts are bare. Under them a golden eagle struggles, its wings forming a supportive 'W', while a red piece of skintight cloth flattens over her stomach. Her panties are black, decorated with glittery stars, a red flag held up in the middle. From her golden girdle, flared out to points at its centre with dozens of small mountings around it, hangs a golden coil of rope, metal bracelets with subtle clips and clasps on her wrists. A golden tiara with a single red star rests in her hair, a black collar studded with pointed teeth around her throat. High-heeled red boots clack on the floor. "You gave me the idea, after all."

"Me?! How did I give you the idea to dress as a stripper?"

"I'm not a stripper, I'm..." she pauses dramatically, "Wonderslut! And with my faithful sidekick Pantie Girl," she gestures at the panties, shivering as a small white face peeks out from behind the flag, "we combat the forces of darkness."

Lisa stares, trying to say something but finding the words jumbled up. "You're not serious. You're half-fucking-naked!"

"Well, yeah. That's kind of the point of this outfit. Look around you, sis. I'm hardly the only one letting things hang out."

"And you're certainly letting things hang out." she mutters.

"Ok, look over there." Lisa follows the finger, to where a nun stands in a crowd, drink in hand, her habit slightly shiny.

"I don't see a problem with..." and then the nun turns revealing that her habit is somehow missing its front, a large gold cross dangling between her breasts.

"To be fair, that is Flo. Considering last year's choice, she's overdressed."

"Overdressed? How is that overdressed?"

"She came as Eve. Her entire costume consisted of an apple. Until she ate it."

"She what?"

"The succubus the year before was about the same. Flo does like to play with mixing religious symbols and sex."

"Goodie for her. Carrie, what were you thinking?"

"That it'd be a laugh. Teasing all the grabby hands with what they can't have."

"How are you planning to get home dressed like that? How did you get here for that matter?"

"Oh, I came in my secret identity of mild-mannered quantum physicist Caroline McCagherty, then I unzipped the skinsuit disguise, put on Pantie Girl, and here I am."

"That explains the, uhm, your, uhm..."

"Comic-book physique?" she giggles, "Yeah, no way could I get this look without surgery

otherwise. Took ages before it produced the right body shape.”

“It's not supposed to be used for that.”

“Oh, I know that. But it's safe. I checked with Mike. And it can do some really good stuff if you concentrate hard enough and don't mind it recharging for ages afterwards.”

“Don't burn it out. It's hell trying to undo one of those enchantments.”

“Yeah, but you can undo them, can't you?”

“Usually.”

“So there's no problem. Apart from my uptight big sister exploding and making a mess of the outfit, that is.”

Lisa visibly takes a deep breath and holds it, her lips slowly moving. “Ten...nine...eight...seven...”

“I think I'd better go. She only does the backwards counting when she's really mad.”

Lisa opens her eyes, “Ooooh, one of these days I am going to actually kill her.”

“Oh, that would be a waste.” he gently reaches around, fingers digging into her stiff shoulders.

“A waste? Ooooh, ok, it might be a waste to kill her, but...”

“Working with your magic fingers again, Peter?” Queen Sarah asks from behind the bar.

“Mmm-hmm.”

“Has he given you the full massage yet?”

Lisa leans her head back, “Yeah, that felt goooood, lying on a cloud, getting pampered.”

“No, I mean the full magic massage. If you think this is good, that feels utterly fan-fucking-tastic. Boneless and relaxed don't even begin to cover it.”

“Full magic massage?”

Queen Sarah smirks, “Yeah. Something for you to try later. Now, I see the Royal Boy-Toy's drink is still at the bar. Shame on you for sloppy service. Even if you did give us a good floor show.”

“You are sooo lucky I'm getting relaxed right now.”

“Oh, really? Think you can keep it up? I'd rather not have to throw anyone bodily out tonight.”

“Ooooooh, yeah, I, aaahhhh, yeah, I'll be a good girl.” she sits up as Peter stops his ministrations.

“Well, I'm not sure I'd ask you go that far. Just no trouble.”

“Ok, ok, why the sudden concern?”

“Because Mark just came in and you two get on like a house on fire: hot, dangerous, usually painful and potentially explosive.”

Lisa looks over, a Roman Centurion walking in from the entrance, the brush plume of his hat matching the crimson cloak swirling around him. A short gladius hangs from his belt, bronze mail shining. He jerks the leash in his hand and the woman on the other end scampers forwards on all fours. Her long tail twitches, leopard like spotted fur covering her, but doing nothing to hide her nakedness, save for the strip of black fabric around her neck. “Fine, fine. I'll leave the slaving creep alone.”

“Is that a Proteus Collar?”

“Yup.” Sarah replies.

“How'd Mark get hold of one of those?”

“Who knows?”

“Well, that explains that.”

“Explains what? And what's a Proteus Collar?”

“What Tabby's wearing. It's a high-end bit of magic. Very potent. It lets the owner have pretty much complete control of the person it's on. Body, mind, you name it, they've got control over it.”

“Oh, a high-end slave collar. And that explains what?”

“How Mark's able to do what he does. He never had that kind of mojo when I knew him.”

“Right.”

“And Tabby let him put that on her willingly?”

“So she says.”

“Wow. I didn't think anyone still agreed to those things. And here he comes. I think this would be a good time to take Stu3P0 his fuel.” he grabs the glass, walking towards the entrance.

Lisa reaches back, taking her drink off the bar.

“Hey, sis, you still mad?”

She sighs, “That depends.”

“Oh, ok. Well, I found a mutual friend, well, friends, sorta. And we match. Isn't it cute?”

Lisa turns, finding a pale woman dressed in a black and red corset cinched tight across her lithe figure. Fishnet stockings and thigh-high black boots cling to her legs, a tiny brass name-badge on the basque's left cup, black hair falling over her shoulders. Behind a Soviet flag on her black panties a tiny naked redhead waves, causing a sharp intake of breath.

“Hello. Interesting costume.”

“Costume? No one said anything about a costume!”

“Right. You always wear people on your knickers.”

“Well, actually...”

“I don't want to know.”

“Isn't it cool? Pantie Girl and P-Anne-ties. We've got a pair of pair of panties.”

“And Sue's managed to get a whole outfit, too.”

“Mundy.” Carrie mutters.

“Whatever. Either of you heard of a Proteus Collar?”

“Oh yeah. Those things can be nasty. You've got to really trust someone to let them have that much control. I wouldn't let Mike use one of those things on me.” she shivers, as Anne moves about on her hips, “But apparently I know someone insane enough who would.”

“Or have a contract as watertight as a mermaid's brassiere. But yeah, not for the sane unless you really, really, really trust them. And even then get things in writing. Why the interest? Peter suggested you wear one?”

“No! Someone else...”

“Ave, Queen Sarah, Most Beautiful of All Monarchs, Face That Launched a Thousand Ships, yadda, yadda, yadda, got anything decent to drink?”

“Mew?”

“And a saucer of milk.”

“Prrrrrrrrr.”

“Ohhhhhh, someone else. Got it.”

Mark turns towards them, drink in hand, “Ahhhhh. Not quite ambrosia but good enough. Ladies.” he tips his helmet, and passes the saucer of milk down. Tabby eagerly bends down, lapping it up, purring all the time. Mark reaches down, scratching the back of her head, the purr becoming more insistent as she rubs against his leg.

“She makes a cute kitty. Can I stroke her?”

“Yeah, sure, why not?”

“Cool.” Carrie squats down, letting Tabby sniff at her hands before she starts stroking her. Tabby purrs loudly as Carrie's hand's rub across her back. “Mindshifted her, too?”

“Of course. The moves aren't right if you don't.”

Tabby rolls onto her back, allowing Carrie's hands to rub through her soft belly fur, encouraging her hands onto her breasts as she wriggles and purrs.

“Looks like she likes you. Can't blame her. I like that costume.”

“Flatterer, but you know what Amazons do to men who proposition them.”

“No, tell me.”

“Well,” she looks up, smiling innocently, “they tend to sing at least an octave higher when we're done. But at least they can wear speedos without feeling all cramped.”

“Not interested?”

“Sorry, you're not my type. Way too many y chromosomes. Unless you'd want to change that, of course...”

He pales a little, “Sorry. You're gorgeous, but no one's that gorgeous.”

“Oh, ok. Can I borrow your kitty then? I want her to play with my kitty.”

“Carrie!”

“How about we discuss that over a glass of something?”

“Carrie...”

Carrie gets up off the floor, “Look, Lisa, give up the big sister routine. It doesn't work. I'm not going to do anything stupid. And if I do, it's my problem not yours. Jesus.”

“You heard her. Maybe you can run back to your Master and ask his permission to get involved.”

Lisa takes a slow intake of breath, counting backwards in her head. Sadly, tennineeightsevensixfivefourthreetwoone doesn't take long to go through. “He is not my Master. Unlike some people he can treat me with respect.”

“He can? Must have changed a bit since he blew up Victoria then.”

“That was an accident!”

“Oh, really? Guess your Master isn't as good as you think then.”

“At least he doesn't need to rely on a fancy collar to get his magic working.”

“Oh, yes, he's soooo much better than me, isn't he?”

“Well, you said it. Better person, better magic, probably better at...” she pauses to glance down at his kirtle, “all sorts of things.”

“Ouch, low blow, sis.”

Mark snorts at that, “Well, if he's so bloody good, he won't mind a friendly little competition, will he?”

“Competition? What sort of competition?”

“Uhm, Lisa, this really isn't...” Sarah starts from behind the bar.

“Oh, interested, are you? Well, I'd be daft to take him on in a power match, wouldn't I? I'm not suicidal.”

“Mark, stop this. You know...”

“It's ok, Saz. I know what I'm doing. So what would it be?”

“Skill, I think. Of course, there's still the stakes to consider. What should we play for?”

“Sis, you really need to shut...”

“Oh, how about your slave?”

“Tabby? That's a pretty high price.” he smirks, “What have you got to put up against her?”

“Sis, I mean it! This is serious!”

“What do you want?”

“Well, as you want to take my toy away from me, I think it's only fair to do the same in reverse.”

“Meaning?”

“Lisa, stop this. You don't know what...”

“You. When I win, you join Tabby in wearing the collar.”

“Sis...”

“When you win? There's no way you're going to win.”

“Done! Pleasure doing business with you.”

“What?!”

“Mark! You know well that duels aren't allowed!”

He smiles, “I'll see you in the Witching Hour, Toy. Come on, Tabby.” He saunters off, whistling.

“What the fuck did you do that for?! Do you have any idea what you've just agreed to?! You stupid, arrgh!”

“I didn't agree to anything!”

“Offer met is bargain made. Sorry, but you did.”

“Did what?” Peter asks as he walks back to the bar.

“Oh, big sis has managed to get herself on a track to being Mark's newest fucktoy sexslave.”

“She's done what?” he turns to Lisa, “You did what?!”

“I didn't do anything!”

“Saz?”

“Mark and Lisa got into a slanging match in which his ability was called into question, especially in relation to you. Got to hand it to her, Lisa has a good eye for the jugular. Although maybe going straight for it isn't the best idea. Anyway, Mark suggested that if you were so much better, a skill challenge wouldn't be a problem. And from there the stakes just went up and up until it was a

challenge to release Tabby or acquire Lisa, depending on who won.”

“So it's a formal duel? Those are illegal.”

“It's going to take place during the Witching Hour...” Sarah trails off, shrugging helplessly.

“So, no laws. Wonderful.”

“The what hour?”

“Witching Hour. You'll see at midnight. It's a time that's not a time. As it's not part of the normal cycle, the laws don't apply therein.”

“Hang on, Peter hasn't agreed to this. And my idiot sister isn't an authorised proxy, so he doesn't have to go ahead.”

“Then he'd forfeit. Lisa was negotiating on his behalf. Recognised partnership.”

“Oh, right. Damn. This really takes the fucking cake, especially after all your crap about my lifestyle.”

“Ok, ok. Enough. Getting mad isn't going to make it go away. It's tonight, then. So no time to practice. No idea exactly what skill was involved?”

“Well, it's either sex or magic as they were the parts that were really laid out, but I doubt even Mark is up for a sex skill contest in front of everyone.”

“So some form of magic, then. Ok. That's doable.”

“You're not worried, are you, Magic Boy?”

“Yeah, little bit. Hell, make that a lot. A fucking lot. This is serious, Lise. If we lose...”

“What?”

“Oh, pay a-fucking-tention, for Christ's sake. If you lose, Mark gets a new toy and how he treats Tabby will be nice compared to how he'll treat you.”

“Oh shit.”

“Yeah, that about sums it up. What a mess.”



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