

PETER & LISA: PART 32
HELLSING

Lisa blinks. Slowly. The pale light is far too bright. She's too hot, sweating, and too cold, shivering at the same time. Her tongue tastes like sandpaper. Her head pounds. "I didn't even have that much to drink," she mumbles, "No fair on the hangover from Hell."

"Lisa? Sis?"

She flops her head over, the blurred figure by the bed resolving itself. She belatedly feels Carrie's hand on hers. "Carrie? What are you doing in my room?"

"You're alive!"

"Course I'm alive. Why wouldn't I be?" she looks around the room, its walls slightly off-white, "This isn't my room."

"No, it's not your room."

"Where am I?"

"Mister E's. One of the back rooms."

"Oh. Why am I here? I didn't get falling over drunk, did I?"

"You don't remember?"

"Hang on, it's coming back. We were helping Tabby..."

"Tabitha. She really doesn't like being called Tabby."

"Right, right. Tabitha, and it wasn't working, and then, and then, then it goes really bright and stops. What happened? Did it work?"

"Kinda sorta."

"Ohhh, not nice to pick on the hungover."

"Well, she's not tiny. How are you feeling?"

"Rough," she squints, "You're crying? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she says quickly.

"Carrie..."

"I'm just so glad you're ok."

"Why wouldn't I be ok?"

"You don't know?"

"Know what?"

"Sis, you've been out for, like 5 days."

"What?! 5 days?! How? What?"

"We were, I was so," she pauses, "don't you ever do that to me again!"

"Do what?"

"Scare me so bad! When you didn't wake up with me and Peter, I thought, I thought..."

"Wake up with you and Peter?"

Carrie laughs, "Sooo not what I meant. You've got a suspicious mind, sis. We were out for a day and a half."

"What? Why? Is Peter..."

"He's fine. Just worried sick."

"Oh. Why was I out for so long?"

"Absolutely no idea. Something happened with the troika. Breaking the collar, or whatever we did, sucked us dry. And then you didn't wake up. And, we thought..." she wipes her eyes dry, "I've got to go and tell the others."

"Others?"

"You didn't think I was the only one worrying, did you?"

Lisa doesn't reply, sinking back into the pillows.

She opens her eyes a few minutes later, she hopes, to an argument barely muffled by the door, "No. You will not see her until I've made sure she's up to it." the reply is inaudible, "I am well aware who you are, and I am well aware why you're here! That does not change the fact that she is not seeing

you until I've made sure she's healthy enough." another inaudible reply, "I know you've been waiting. A few more minutes won't make any difference." more inaudible replies, "Oh, I'm sure someone of your calibre will be able to check I've not been naughty. Now, get out of my way. Or I am going to get very annoyed!" the door bursts open and slams quickly shut behind Sarah.

"Hi, Saz."

"Well, that's something at least." She sits on the bed, taking hold of Lisa's wrist, "How are you feeling?"

"Hungover."

"Feel up to dealing with official questions?" she casts a quick glance at the door, taking the beat of Lisa's pulse.

"Questions?"

"Ohhhhhh yeah. Lots and lots and lots of questions."

"Who from?"

"Official questions."

"I think so." Sarah's hand rests on her forehead.

"Ok. If you're sure. But answer these people's questions as fully as you can. And do not get angry at them."

"Ok."

"Not good enough. I want your word that you'll keep yourself under control."

"My word?"

"Your word. That's how serious this is."

"Ok. I give my word that I will not get mad."

"Good enough. We'll have a proper chat later." she opens the door. "You can come in. She's fit enough, but a bit weak. Lisa, I'll be outside if you need something."

"Your cooperation is appreciated, Mrs Drake, and noted." a thin, sibilant voice whispers as its owner enters the room. His black habit swishes across the smooth floor, a soft flap of loose leather under them. A black cord loops around his waist, his hands hidden inside the thick voluminous sleeves. A heavy cowl throws his face into darkness. Lisa swallows, blinking to make sure the room isn't really darkening as he slowly approaches the bed. He sits down, turning the black, empty hood towards her. "You are Ms Lisa McCagherty." The sepulchral voice from within the cowl whispers, sounding like the rustle of dry, crumbling papers, holding with it a feeling of age.

"Yes." she coughs, "Yes."

"I am Hellsing."

Lisa swallows again.

"You will detail the events of last Samhain for me."

Lisa scoots herself along, propping herself up against the pillows, taking a deep breath to avoid doing anything at the tone, "When would you like me to start? When we got to Mister E's? Before?"

"When you accepted an invitation to duel will suffice."

"I was drinking with my sister, when Mark comes up with Tabby as his pet. Carrie, my sister, started playing with Tabby."

"In what way?"

"Rubbing her belly, stuff like that. Tabby was some sort of cat person. Anyway, she, Carrie, and Mark were going to talk about, about borrowing Tabby. I said something to stop them."

"Why?"

"Because she's my little sister and he's a creep. Then he started needling me, and led me down a discussion about a challenge. He didn't call it a duel."

"And you agreed."

"So I'm told. I said something about when he lost. He took that as agreement."

"Flimsy. But acceptable. And so you agreed to an illegal duel."

"Sort of."

The hood fixes her with a long stare, "It is either yes or no. You accepted. You did not accept."

"I accepted." she swallows, "But I didn't intend to."

"Intentions do not mater. Actions matter. You accepted."

"Then Peter came back, while Carrie and Sarah were giving me an earful about what I'd just done. We tried to think of a way to stop it as I'd had no idea what I was getting myself into..."

"Peter Stafford's instruction had been insufficient. This surprises me not at all."

"No, he told me not to agree to anything. I didn't think I was. I suppose he didn't mention duels as they're illegal so I didn't need to know about them."

"Speculation. Continue."

Lisa bristles, but manages to keep her control. "We spent the rest of the evening getting ready as best we could as Mark hadn't told us what the challenge was, just that it would be happening in the Witching Hour."

"So. The duel begins. And you are declared victors. Continue."

"The prize for winning was that Mark would release Tabby from the, uhm, Prote-something Collar."

"Proteus Collar."

"That's it. Anyway, for his last trick, he'd eaten her. So he coughed up the collar, but no Tabby. Peter put his hand into Mark to pull her out."

"Peter Stafford assaulted another with magic. Also unsurprising."

"Are you saying he should have let Mark kill her?"

"I say nothing. You are under investigation. Continue."

"Fine. Peter rescued" she stresses the word hard, "Tabby, oh, Tabitha, I suppose I should have said, but she was still as small as she was when Mark ate her, so about this big?" she holds her thumb and finger apart to show the size. The hood nods. "And then Peter took Carrie, Tabitha, and me to one of the side rooms. He tried to get her back to normal, but it didn't work."

"Undo a Proteus Collar? Arrogant. Family trait."

"So he asked Carrie and me if we'd help him. He explained what the downside was, but we both said yes."

"And that was when you all formed an unsanctioned troika."

"Yes. Wait, unsanctioned?"

"Continue."

"What do you mean unsanctioned?"

"Continue."

Lisa grinds her teeth, "Then we tried again. It wasn't working. Then something happened. It all went white."

"And you created the anomaly."

"Created what? What anomaly?"

"Anomaly called Tabitha Weller."

"She is not an anomaly."

"Incorrect."

She bites her lip, realising that she won't get any more information and more questions might annoy the Hellsing, "And that's everything."

"Your cooperation has been appreciated, Ms Lisa McCagherty, and noted. In future, be more careful. You escape justice, on many counts, on a technicality alone. Your associations cause us concern. We will be watching." he rises from the chair, walking to the door in silence, the room lightening again as he turns the handle and departs.

"I'm impressed. No yelling."

Lisa tries her best to glare across the room at Sarah, but it lacks a certain amount of force. "Is Tabitha alright?"

"Ah. You would pick a difficult question to start with. Yes and no. Mostly yes, though."

"And she's not in any trouble with, with them?"

"Not immediately. She's waiting to see you, by the way. Want me to send her up? Or would you rather see your boyfriend?"

"I don't know. Is Peter ok?"

"Apart from worrying about you, he's fine. Shall I see which one I find first?"

"Yeah, go for it. Means I don't have to make a decision."

"Slacker. I'll see who I can find. And then we'll have a nice chat about your new ring."

"What new ring?"

"The red one on your left hand that's invisible at the moment. Ciao."

"Ohhhhhh, that's not going to be a fun conversation."

"No, I don't imagine it is. You won't enjoy this one, either."

Lisa rolls over to see the tiny fairy hovering by the bed. "What did I mess up this time?"

"You made a wish. A very irresponsible one, at that. And I warned you not to do that, but, oh no, you giants always know better, don't you?"

"What did I wish for? And what did it do?"

"You wished you could help. Something that vague is always dangerous to ask for. The wish allowed you to help; it just had to use an awful lot of energy to overcome the effects of the Collar. As you made the wish, it drew most of that energy from you. You are a very, very lucky young woman to still be alive. It not only used up all the magic the three of you had in you, but it used your life force to bolster the gap. It..." she vanishes in mid-sentence as the door opens.

"Ran into Tabitha first. Now to find your missing boytoy."

Tabitha's eyebrows rise a little as Sarah smiles and leaves the room. Her white-blond hair now lies clipped to her head in a twisted knot, rather than a mass of bouncy curls. The devastating body does its best to stay hidden under a loose white blouse and black pencil skirt, but she can't seem to help the sway of her hips as she walks across, or the fact that even the loose blouse can't disguise her ample figure.

"Boytoy?"

"In-joke. How are you after..."

"After everything that happened? I'm better than I should be. I guess." she sighs, "More to the point, how are you?"

"I'll live."

"That's a relief. I can't, I can't begin to thank you enough for what you did."

"It's done. I'm glad you're alright. With that Hellsing talking about you like that..."

"The guy in the robes? Yeah. He really creeped me out."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing. Well, nothing useful, just kept getting me to go over what happened. From my 'agreement' with that bastard, all the way up to you killing yourself to free me. Did I mention that I can't thank you enough for that?"

"To be fair, I didn't know it would almost kill me."

"Oh. Then I might be able to thank you enough. Maybe."

"What's with the look?"

Tabitha sighs, "Best I could do. I've still got that Tabby body, after all. And it looks like I'm stuck like this. People tried, but nothing seems to change me. Not even for a minute. Even using that fucking collar didn't work."

"You let Mark use the collar on you?"

She shivers, "No. Sarah persuaded him to let Stuart use it. Didn't help. So short of a lot of plastic surgery, I'm stuck. If I wear anything even a little tight, it shows. A lot. This" she tugs at the blouse, "is a couple of sizes too big and it's only just hiding them. Buying bras is going to be fun in future."

"Sorry."

"Sorry?? Without you I'd be a pet or worse. This is manageable. Although I doubt I'll be taken seriously in court in my oversized clothes and phone sex voice."

"Court??"

"I was a lawyer. Well, solicitor. Now? I don't know. I'll find something."

"Of course, you will."

"I just wish I could talk to my family about it."

"Why..."

"Well, first I'd have to explain why their slim, late-developing, brunette daughter and her glasses

now look like this. And I've been told, very clearly, that that's not allowed. Stuart offered to, what did he say, 'smooth things over' with them, memory wise so they didn't notice the disconnect, but that's not something I want to do to them. So I'm writing to them and lying." she says bitterly, "I'm in the witness protection scheme. So I can't contact them in person. It's very scary that you people have a plan to deal with things like this."

"Yeah. You're taking this remarkably well."

"Yeah, well, beating the creep helped a lot. And the people here have been very supportive. Besides, screaming and shouting and kicking haven't changed it yet. Anyway, I'm really glad you're going to be ok. If you need anything, look me up. I'll be around here for a bit until I can find a place of my own and a job. Your Sarah swears she's got something in mind for me to do."

"I have, too." they both look at the door, now filled with Sarah's and Peter's bodies, "Some legal contract work that really needs looking at. I'll show you. And we can leave these two together."

"Bye!" the door closes, "How are you doing, Magic Boy?"

"I'll live. You?" he sits on the bed, taking her hand.

"I'll live. Not going to yell at me?"

"Not this time. Maybe when you've recovered so we can make up properly afterwards."

Lisa's laugh dissolves into a rough cough, "Ooooh, not nice. Don't make me laugh."

"Sorry."

"You're forgiven. What happened to do this?"

"I don't know. Something went wrong with the troika. Maybe we were trying too hard, maybe Mark coming in upset the emotional balance, maybe Tabitha drew on the power somehow, maybe the troika formed incorrectly. Could be almost anything. I have no idea why you got hit hardest. As the lead, it should have been me. Sorry."

"You're still forgiven."

"So are you."

"For what?"

"Scaring me. Getting into the duel in the first place. Getting the Hellsings mad at me again."

"Again? He wasn't complimentary, but, well, he wasn't complimentary about anything."

"After, you know, after," he takes a breath, "after Victoria, the Hellsings investigated me."

"But you didn't mean it."

"I didn't. Which is why I'm still here to talk about it, but once you've drawn their attention, they watch you a lot more. 'No smoke without fire' is practically a mission statement for them."

"But that's..."

"Not fair? Probably not. Care to argue that with them?"

"Hell no. That guy was creepy enough."

"Doesn't help that my Dad was investigated too. 'The apple doesn't fall far from the tree' is another one that fits them well."

"What was he investigated for?"

"It's kinda complicated and won't make sense as I'll have to leave bits out."

"More secrets?"

"Afraid so. Sorry."

"Enough apologising, Magic Boy."

"Sor..." he stops, smiling at her.

"You're just taking advantage of the fact that I'm too weak to hit you right now."

"Well, yeah, a little."

She settles for sticking out her tongue. "Ok, question time: Why did he keep calling Tabby an anomaly?"

"Oh, he asked you that, too?"

"I wouldn't say asked..."

"Well, as far as we can tell, Tabitha's immune to magic now."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning we can't change her at all, not even for a few moments. Even the Proteus Collar doesn't

work on her and that's seriously powerful stuff. Mind control doesn't work, either."

"How do you know that?" Lisa asks suspiciously.

"Stuart tried to calm her down on Samhein. Rolled right off her without even a flicker."

"So?"

"So I haven't heard of anybody, as in anybody in the history of the world, who's immune to magic. And I guess she scares the Hellsings."

"She scares them?"

"Their power's pretty much all magic. She's immune to magic. Quite a shock to them."

Lisa smiles, "Yeah. It must be. Are they always so..."

"Yes, they are. Always. It's part of the job. Fear disorients people. The directness disorients people. That gives a better chance of getting the truth out."

"Oh. You approve?"

"I understand. Not quite the same thing."

"So they're scared of Tabitha. And we're responsible for her being immune, even if we don't know exactly how we did it. I guess they must loooove us."

"Yeah, something like that."

"How much trouble are we in, then?"

"None, at the moment. But they'll be keeping a close eye on us, you can be sure of that. They're probably giving us some more rope."

"Lovely image there, Magic Boy."

"Sorry."

"Ok, now you're pushing it."

"Could be worse."

"Oh, how?"

"We could be Mark."

"Oh, what happened to him?"

"Nothing grisly. But he's been put on probation."

"Probation? Just probation? After what he did?"

"Yes. Just probation."

"For kidnap, assault and rape?"

"Technically, she gave her consent, so he's on a much lower charge."

"Marvellous. He gets a slap on the wrist."

"Possibly."

"Ok. I know that tone. What are you hiding?"

"Who his probation officer is."

"And that is? It's not you, is it?"

"Hardly. I'm not exactly in the good graces of the Hellsings. It's Stuart."

"Stuart?"

"Yup. And Mark isn't exactly in his good books at the moment."

"Shame it wasn't Sarah."

"You really think Stuart's going to act without advice from his loving wife?"

She smiles, "Oh. Pooooor Mark."

"Something like that. You feeling up to being moved?"

"Yeah. I think so. As long as I'll have someone to wait on me hand and foot."

"I'll ask Carrie if she's free."

She swats at him.

"Yeah, you're getting better. I'll talk to Saz about whether she'll let you out." He leans in to kiss her forehead gently before he leaves.

"Finally. I thought he'd never leave."

"You're still here?"

"Obviously."

"And you were spying on me the whole time?"

"I wouldn't say spying. Just...present when interesting things were being talked about. You really have made a mess of things, haven't you?"

"Hey!"

"Hey yourself. Your Tabitha is going to cause problems. Big problems."

"Why?"

"She upsets the balance of power. Old Merlin isn't going to be happy about this at all."

"Merlin?"

"Yes. Heard of him?"

"Someone's called themselves Merlin? As in King Arthur's wizard?"

"No, someone is Merlin, as in King Arthur's wizard."

"What??"

"Never mind. That's not why I'm here." She floats down to Lisa's left hand, "I'm here to see if you've damaged things more than I think you have." She lands, sitting crosslegged on the bed, her wings stretched out behind her, peering intently at the ring, making waving motions with her hands.

Several minutes pass before she dusts herself off and gets up, "Well?"

"Well, you're still a rude and irresponsible young woman. And the ring isn't damaged. It's growing again. I've had to add filters to it. This way if you try to kill yourself with a major working again, it should be a lot more difficult and you'll have to actually push at things to do it. But it will make using the ring for anything a bit more difficult for you. Just a warning."

"Thanks."

"Ah, some courtesy does exist in you. You're welcome. Please try to be careful. You've managed to misuse this twice already. A third time might attract attention from someone far less understanding than me. And neither of us want that, do..." the door swings open and she vanishes with an almost audible pop.

"How's my patient?" Sarah asks.

"Living."

"Well, if you're up for making jokes, I might be able to let you go."

"Thanks."

"Of course, I'll need to satisfy myself about some things first."

"No needles?"

"Not unless you really deserve them. Now, the ring. Explain."

"It's kind of a secret."

"The invisibility was a clue. Which makes it even more interesting. Don't worry, I can keep secrets. I am a magician's assistant, after all."

"Promise you won't tell this to anyone?"

"Anyone?"

"Ok, just not Stuart or anyone else who'll tell Peter."

"Ok."

"Promise."

Sarah smiles, "Well, at least you're learning something. I promise not to reveal whatever secrets you tell me about the ring to anyone I think will tell Peter."

"Ok. I've had it for a few months."

"Sneaky. There's hope for you yet."

"Anyway, it can make me invisible, or shrink me, or make me into a ghost."

"Hmmm."

"And it grants wishes."

Sarah's eyes shoot up. "It does what?"

"Well, it sort of grants them. Apparently it shouldn't be doing that yet, but, well, I wished I could help Tabby and, it did that. Nearly killed me."

"Oh. Fairy ring?"

"How did you know?"

"Their wishing rings tend to draw on the person's own power and amplify it. Plus the design's familiar." She looks off into the middle distance for a few moments, thinking.

"And?"

“Nothing. Just some stray thoughts. And that’s it?”

“I was warned it might grow more powerful and do other things the longer I use it.”

“Definitely a fairy ring. Be very careful with it. Fairy gifts usually come with catches.”

“Yeah. Haven’t found them yet, but...”

“Ok. Do not make any more wishes. Especially not here. And if that thing puts Grace in any danger whatsoever, I’ll rip your hand off to get rid of it. Clear?”

“You’re kidding.”

“Where my child’s concerned? Not even slightly. Are we clear?” she asks again, meeting Lisa’s gaze.

“We’re clear.”

“Good. Then you can go. Just don’t stress yourself. And make sure Peter doesn’t stress himself either. His aura’s nowhere near as strong as it usually is.”

“Aura?”

“Strength, soul, whatever it is that powers magic.”

“How’s mine?”

“Thin, but getting better. Now, [you get some sleep and recover.](#)”

Lisa yawns, “Yes, Mother.” She sinks into the pillows.

Sarah turns towards the bedside table, “You can stop hiding now.” The fairy fades into existence, flitting up to her shoulder, “I thought I recognised the design, Janet. What were you thinking giving her a wishing ring?”

“Well, it’s not supposed to be that powerful yet. She’s growing faster than she should be.”

“Is she? How interesting. Why don’t we go to my office and you can tell me alllllll about it?”



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