

PETER & LISA: PART 33
CARRIE & LISA: PART 1
MAGIC LESSONS: LESSON 1

Now, “You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?” Lisa scowls, her flattened body swaying in the frame below her, her head the only three-dimensional part of her.

Her sister beams down at her, dressed professionally, her long auburn hair tied into a bun.

“Obviously not. This is done purely for your own good. “

“You’d be more convincing if the Cheshire Cat didn’t want his smile back.” She sulks.

“It’s to illustrate a point. You did agree to it.”

Lisa’s scowl deepens. “How did I let myself get talked into this?”

Earlier, “You are kidding me, right?”

“No. Definitely not kidding.”

“But...Carrie??”

“Why not? She’s gone through exactly what you’re going through. She knows the rules and how our little community operates. She’s smart and, unlike me, she won’t assume you know stuff you don’t so you get into big trouble later.”

“Why not Sarah?”

“She’s busy, what with E’s, supervising Mark and babysitting Grace.”

“Or the other way round.” She mutters.

“Or the other way round. Besides, Carrie’s working at the university and that does involve instructing undergrads so she’s got some experience at teaching.”

“Yeah, granted, but...”

“But she annoys the hell out of you. That’s another reason for her doing it.”

“What?”

“If you can keep that famous temper of yours under wraps with her, you can do it with anyone. And even if you do screw up, she won’t abuse her position too much.”

“And Sarah would?”

“Possibly. Sarah’s nowhere near as sweet and nice and normal as she wants you to think.”

“Bah. And, apart from the opportunity to make me miserable, what does Carrie get out of this?”

“Do you think she needs anything else?”

“Yes. Sibling rivalry isn’t that big a deal for either of us.”

“Carrie gets something out of it, don’t worry.”

“But you won’t tell me what. Suspicious.”

“I’m letting her borrow some of my stuff. She and her flatmate are,” he pauses, “experimenting a lot.”

“Do I want to know?”

“No. Definitely not.” He replies, blushing.

Later, but still before now, “You’re living here?”

“Yeeeeeesss. Why?”

“Peter used to live on the top floor.”

“Really? Heh. Small world.”

“Yeah.” she looks down at the crisp white blouse and black pencil skirt. “Getting dressed up?”

“Well, if you’re going to be slovenly student, one of us has to maintain professional standards as teacher, right?”

“Ha. Ha.”

“And you’ll obey the school rules, I trust.”

“Yeah, sure, whatever.”

Carrie shuts the door behind her.

“So where’s your flatmate? You’re not wearing her again, are you?”

"Not today. Well, not right at the moment. She's shy. And I didn't want us to be disturbed."

"You didn't put her in that box, did you?"

Carrie smiles coyly, absently stroking the teeth-studded collar around her neck.

"Fine, fine, I don't want to know. Is this going to take long? I might pop upstairs and see how Ola is, maybe pick up the portal from her."

"Depends how good and attentive a pupil you are." She pulls out a blackboard from behind the door of the living room.

"Where did you get that?"

"Your boyfriend lent it to me. Completes the teacher image."

"It's magic, isn't it?"

"Well, yeah. Watch." she turns to the board, "Write: School Rule 0 – Any breach of the rules shall be punished at the teacher's discretion." a piece of chalk floats up and obediently scratches across the blackboard.

"You are not serious."

Carrie holds up her finger, "Write: Rule 1 – Teacher will always be addressed by the student as Miss McCagherty, or Miss. No first names and certainly no nicknames."

"Carrie..."

"Oh, oh, dear. That sounds like a nickname to me. Now, what punishment should I select?"

"This isn't funny."

"No, it isn't. This is very serious. But you never get it. Peter's way too nice to really carry through if you fuck up. Sorry, when you fuck up. Now, what shall we do to my unruly student?" she smiles,

"I've got it." she pulls out a small plastic inflation stem.

"Is that? You wouldn't? Don't you dare!"

"**Sit still and shut up.**" she walks closer as Lisa sits rigid in the chair, "Write: Rule 2 – The student will obey the teacher." She starts to pull up Lisa's t-shirt. Lisa tries to plead with her, but her mouth refuses to move, making her pleas inarticulate groans. Her eyes go wide, breathing rapid and shallow as Carrie exposes her navel. She feels the stem press against her skin, and feels the cool plastic melt into her body. She tries to struggle, but her body doesn't move. She feels the stem spread, the empty feeling of air filling her body. Her skin tingles as it turns to plastic. She feels it resculpting her sex into a smooth, open tunnel, seams rising along her sides. Her paralysed mouth pulls into an 'O'. Her eyes glaze over into painted plastic, although somehow they still work. Nylon strands replace her hairs, her nipples twisting into nubs of plastic. Finally, the transformation is complete and she sits silently on the chair, her clothes brushing infuriatingly against her newly sensitive skin. She wants to escape; she wants to be turned back; she wants, she wants to be used; she wants to be taken like this; she wants...to strangle her sister!

Carrie turns back to the board, "Write: Rule 3 – The student will not assault the teacher in any way, or use magic against her in any detrimental fashion, or the effects will apply to her rather than the teacher. There. That concludes the school rules. For the moment. I might think of some more later. Now, to continue the lesson, I think we'll start with agreements and how moronically stupid it is to make a blind agreement. Don't worry; I'll get to what a blind agreement is in a minute.

"Now, agreements in our community, as you know, or at least as you should know, are very important. There are a number of types: Blind agreements are ones that you make without knowing all the terms; Implicit agreements are ones where the agreement is taken as read from other comments; Hidden agreements are the ones where you don't even know you're in an agreement; and finally we have Proper agreements where the terms are known, or at least available, and both sides agree. These apply to all agreements, whether they're verbal or written. Written agreements are better, because obviously you can refer back to it if there's a dispute.

"Onto the details," she looks across at the blank green painted eyes, "you are still paying attention in there, right?" no response, "Ok, I admit it; a silent form might not have been the best idea. Now, where did I put that thing?" she turns, pulling out a small bag and reaching into it. She spends some time digging through the contents, finally pulling out a silver headband, feeling it hum in her hands. "Yeah, this should do it. Now, where's the other one?" Another deep rummage follows, until she's

pulled out a second band.

She walks over to Lisa, "Now, don't yell at me, alright? This is for your own good." She places one of the headbands securely onto the plastic scalp, brushing the nylon hair aside. Lisa continues her vacant plastic stare ahead, feeling the headband humming, a gentle warmth pressing on her forehead. Carrie stands back and places the other band around her head.

"You utter, utter, bitch! How dare you! You've turned me into a fucktoy!! When I get out of this, I am going to kill you. Slowly. With a fucking spoon!"

Carrie blinks, *"Oh, grow up. You entered into a stupid blind agreement. Again. And now you're blaming me when the consequences hit. Well, boo fucking hoo."*

"You tricked me!"

"Yeah, that was kind of the point of the exercise. You need to learn how the magic world operates and how you survive in it. And if that means I have to turn you into a fuckdoll for a day or two, that's what it takes!"

"You...a day or two?"

"I never said how long the rules applied for. I could, according to the agreement, keep you like this forever."

"FOREVER?!!!"

"Ow. Technically and legally, sure. I probably won't, but that's only because I love you so much. There's nothing to compel me to let you go. And obviously, with you threatening me like that, I've got a major incentive not to now. I'm going to take the headband off and get on with the lesson. Pay attention, there will be a quiz afterwards. If you do well, and make some promises about my safety, I'll restore you. Alright?"

"Do I get a choice?"

"No, not really, but I'm being polite." she removes the headband and Lisa once more goes silent.

"Now, onto the nature of agreements. First of we have Hidden agreements. These do not count as agreements. You have to know, or at least you should be able to reasonably know, that you're in an agreement to have an agreement. So, if someone hands you a document that says 'by accepting this document, you agree to do whatever' without letting you know that's what it says, it doesn't matter. The agreement's a wash and they're in major league trouble if they try to apply it. If they hand you a document and ask you to sign it, that's different. You have to check. If they actually lie and say it's just an autograph, then it becomes an arguable case. But it's best to check yourself and not have to worry about losing the argument.

"One step above are implicit agreements. This is what Mark got you to agree to. By agreeing terms, you effectively agree even if you don't explicitly say 'yes'. If you're getting involved in a hypothetical situation, make damn sure you say that it's all hypothetical so they can't claim it's an implicit agreement. These are legal. More or less. Sort of. You can be forced to honour them, but they're looked on as con tricks so if you use them a lot, people stop talking to you.

"Above them, we move into blind agreements. These are the ones that only monumentally stupid or naïve people have any excuse for agreeing to. You're not either, so you've got no excuse. If you don't know what you're agreeing to, don't! Take a step back, check you've got the right idea, then decide. If you really trust the person, then you can give them a bit of latitude; if not, at the very least, always agree a time frame the agreement will run for. Blinds are usually verbal, like the one you're caught in, but if you get a contract, read it. If you don't understand it, get your lawyer to read it and check it. Never sign anything you don't understand. If you use these on someone who isn't in the community, it works like an implicit contract. You can do it, but expect people to treat you like scum after a while.

"Finally we move onto the ideal type of contract, the formal open ones, where everything's laid out, you know what you're getting in to and it's all fine with you. If you can manage it, don't sign anything else. Got all that?"

Lisa remains silent. Carrie places the circlet back on her head.

"Yes, I got all that. Not too heavy-handed, were you?"

Carrie shrugs, *"Got to break through your thick skull first. Now, quiz questions."*

"You're not serious."

"Today, I am very serious. Making sure my sister doesn't get herself sold into slavery or worse brings out my serious nature, apparently."

"I get it, I get it. Get on with it so I can kill you."

"Well, as you asked so nicely. What type of contract did you stupidly get suckered into agreeing to on Samhain?"

She hears the sigh across the headbands, *"An implicit contract. And the one you got me to agree to was a blind contract. Both only used by disreputable arseholes."*

"Was that another nickname I heard?"

"No. It was a simple description."

"Good. You're getting the hang of this. So, why are open contracts good?"

"Because you know what it is you're getting into."

"Good. And finally, which is better: a contract with penalty clauses or one without?"

"What?! You never mentioned that!"

"Nope. And I can't cover every nuance and eventuality for you either, so think! Our family managed to spawn one genius so you can't be a complete numpty, which do you think's better?"

Silence echoes across the mental gap, *"Penalty clauses. At least then you know what you're dealing with."*

"I'll accept that."

"So, you'll turn me back now?"

"Well, no."

"What?! Why not?"

"I warned you to sleep with one eye open. This is payback. We'll see how you do on the next quiz."

she jerks the headband off before the stream of angry curses can cross. "Now, some revision.

Magical accessories. These come in three basic flavours: Gaff, Gadget and Prop. Gaffs do one or two things, but they're not really versatile. They do, however, work for anyone. These are what you give to new assistants to start to build up their reserves. My swords are gaffs. Your light sabre isn't, you lucky, lucky thing.

"Gadgets are the next step up. To use 'em, you have to have some magic oomph going for you, so they don't work for people right out of the box. They're a bit more versatile, but tend to be limited still. Your light sabre is a good example of this. Or they produce more impressive effects than a gaff will, like the cannibal collar here." she gestures at the collar around her neck, "Which lets you eat people without doing them any real harm. Although telling them that first is a good plan or they get very wriggly and you might get a black eye.

"Then we have Props, which are really just focusing tools for people with a lot of magical power. Mike's wand's the best example of that.

"Actually, there's another category which is Artefacts. The Proteus Collar really fits in with that as you barely need any magic to start it up, but it's practically unlimited in what it can do.

"Now, as you knew all that already, we'll move on to the related area of magical ranks, ability and status before we get to the quiz. Obviously we start at the bottom with the Mundanes, those poor people who can't do magic and have absolutely no idea of what they're missing out on.

"Then you move up to you and me, the Assistants. Sometimes we're called Apprentices or Acolytes, but it's all the same thing. We know there's magic, we've got some magical power built up, but we can't really focus it. We're bottom of the heap, status wise.

"Then you have the Magicians, Alchemists and Artificers who CAN focus their power. They also tend to have more power. They can use props and build all sorts of things to make use of their magic but still need props to really do anything.

"That brings us to the aristocracy of magic, the Sorcerers, Priests, Wizards and Witches. These are the people who can do magic without the need for props. And by magic, I really mean something physical. Magicians can do mental magic, and most assistants can manage a few tricks, but these guys get to play with the laws of nature direct. Peter fits in here. He doesn't need props to do what he does. He could use anything or nothing and still get the magic to do what he wants. Technically

Wizards use spells, which are sort of props, but no one dares tell them that they're not at the top table as they've still got power to burn on changing people into amphibians.

"And then we have the odd cases who have special titles. The Hellsings, creepy bastards that they are, fall outside the traditional categories. They're the police so they're apart and separate from the rest of us. No idea what they can actually do, don't think I want to find out, either, but Saz swears it's very, very, very bad.

"Speaking of Saz, you've also got the Keepers. I don't know what they keep yet, but they're powerful people. Well, politically, anyway. They're sort of ambassadors, or governors. They're responsible for civil administration effectively in their areas. So Stuart and Sarah are bigwigs. When she says she's Queen Saz, she's not entirely joking. I don't THINK she can order us executed or banished or anything, but she wasn't exactly forthcoming on what she could do.

"Oh, before I forget, never, ever, ever, ever call anyone who can do real magic a conjurer. That's what they call people who are mundane stage magicians. It's a pretty bad insult. So I know you'll be waiting to use it on Mark. Don't.

"And then you have SORM, the Society of Real Magicians. The guys who handle the business side of things. They organise trade shows, showcase new tricks, and help us act like we're just people who do magic tricks for a living.

"Finally, we have the Conclave Adepti. Those are the real powerhouses. They're the community's equivalent of the government. Really big players. They don't really do much themselves, but if they want something done, it'll get done. They're the ones behind the rules we live by. And, get this, they're led by Merlin. Just a title, but still..."

"Anyway, we'll stop there for lunch. I'll ask you your questions when I get back." She walks out off the room leaving Lisa sitting silently in the chair.

A few seconds later, Carrie's back, "Ok, I admit it. That would be too cruel." she reaches out for the inflation stem, "Besides I'm not hungry. My flatmate made a really filling breakfast today." She stops, placing the headband on, "*Now, do you promise not to harm, afflict, inconvenience or in any other way get back at me for today? Now, and on an ongoing basis, without prejudice, and without getting anyone else to do it for you. In other words, no revenge, at all, for this object lesson. If you agree, I'll take the stem out. If not, I'll keep you like this and deliver you to Peter to restore tonight. And if you break your word, everything you try to do to me will happen to you instead. Karmic retribution. So, do you agree?*"

"How long did you spend planning this if you've got an agreement like that all ready?"

"Oh, long enough to close off the loopholes. I figured you'd either get caught in the blind or blow your top and give me another excuse to punish you. Now, deal...or no deal?"

"Yeah, ok, I agree not to seek revenge on you for today."

"Great." Carrie pulls off the headband, "This was messing up my hair anyway." she pulls out the inflation stem. Lisa's body shudders, her breath catching as the plastic body fills in with flesh and blood. "Good, isn't it? It's even more fun if you get played with. You would not believe how sensitive it makes everything. Well, maybe you would, but still, you know what I mean. Still, once you've got your breath back, time for the pop quiz."

"What happens if I don't get them right this time?"

"My advice: don't. So, question 1: what don't you call people in our community?"

"Conjurer. Or Mundane."

"Right. And a bonus point."

"Question 2: Who is the Keeper of London? And what is a Keeper?"

"Sarah. And they're governors."

"Ohhhhhh, one out of two. Stuart's officially the Keeper. It's just Saz is much better at scaring the living shit out of people."

"And three, what grade of magical item is that little ring you've got on?"

"How did you know about that?!?"

"Saz thought it might be a good idea if I knew you had a wishing ring so I could take precautions. She did make me promise not to tell anybody else, though. So..."

"Ok, ok. It's definitely not a gaff. It's probably a prop, but that would mean I can do magic on my own, so it can't be...can it?"

"You tell me."

"It's mostly a gadget. But I guess, from what she said, it might grow to become a prop. Is that possible?"

"It might be. Making magic items isn't exactly what I'm good at. At least not yet." she stares off into the middle distance.

"I know that look. You're going to be taking things apart until you can build them yourself, aren't you?"

"No!"

Lisa looks over at her sceptically, "Like you didn't demolish two old TVs and a radio before you got the hang of them?"

"Well, ok, I did that, but I don't know nearly enough about how magic works to do that with my toys yet."

"You plan to, though, don't you?"

"You betcha. Living on hand-me-downs and off the shelf stuff isn't my style. Besides, I've got some really...interesting ideas I want to try out."

"On who?"

"Oh, don't worry, not you. I've already got a test subject."

"Your mysterious flatmate?"

"Exactly. You want some food? Or back to the grind?"

"Might as well get back to it."

"That's the spirit." She steps back to the blackboard.

"Do you really have to do that? It feels like I'm back at school."

"It's supposed to. Now, shush."

Lisa glowers up at her, "Yes, Miss McCagherty."

Carrie beams, "See, you're learning. Now, next up is cooperation and magic numbers."

"Magic numbers?"

"Some numbers have magical power. If you join forces with other magicians in these numbers, you get a bigger boost than you should."

"Like the troika."

"Exactly like the troika. Three is one of those magic numbers. However, it's not just for extra power. They keep turning up in divinations, too. And they can occur in spontaneous magical displays, or empower things by focusing magical energy."

"I thought you didn't know about that?"

"I don't know how it focuses it, just that it can. Anyway, onto the actual stuff to tell you. Starting at the bottom, you've got 1. Basis of everything. It's usually included but only for completeness. Then you move up to two, a magical couple are more powerful than two independent magicians. A couple is always better than a single.

"Then we move onto 3. Another powerful magic number that keeps cropping up. Triangles are magical. Three wishes are also common. And there's a reason for that.

"Four seasons, four elements, four humours, four cardinal directions. Another one that keeps cropping up. Five is that only more so, what with us being a pentadactyl race plus the pentagram, obviously."

"A what race?"

"Pentadactyl. Five digits." She wiggles her fingers.

"Oh, right."

"Then we finally skip six entirely and get to seven. Seven deadly sins and virtues. Seven seas, Seven Days of the week. Then there's a big jump to 12."

"Months?"

"And the Zodiacs. Up next is 13, and why that's magical I really shouldn't have to explain. Officially, it's a Coven and is one of the ways magicians get grouped and organised. Strictly

speaking, you have to register all such things. Partnerships everyone registers without thinking about it, but Troikas, Pentacles and Hebdomads should all be sanctioned; Covens need to be. The power curve they produce is pretty steep, so they need official approval. You can scrape by with the others. Don't do that with a Coven."

"Which is why the Hellsing got mad at us for forming a troika without asking?"

"Yup. You saw what we could do just by a three-fold Joining. Imagine that with thirteen. There isn't much you couldn't do. And that always makes officialdom worried."

"That's the last one, right?"

"Nope. Two more. 23. No idea why, but this one seems to have sprung up recently. Conspiracy theorists see it everywhere. No one's tried getting one of them together, but that's probably because someone would be down on then like the proverbial ton of bricks. The only other one of note is 169."

"169? Why?"

"13 squared. A Coven of Covens."

"What's it called?"

"A Conclave."

"Conclave? So the Conclave is..."

"Probably. And that's a lot of power to back things up when they have to."

"Yeah. I'm surprised they haven't taken over the world yet."

"Who says they haven't? You've heard of the Illuminati, right?"

"Now I know you're kidding."

"Probably. Besides, there's a really good reason they haven't taken over the world."

"Which is?"

"Competitive streak. You have to really trust people to form this kind of bond. Getting together that many magic workers without two clashing over who's top dog? Almost impossible unless you have one powerful guy and a lot of second stringers, but then you're not making the most of the Joining. Most groups are going to be Pentacles or Troikas because getting more is more hassle than it's worth. Add to that that you have to maintain the unity of purpose and, well, an actual maintained Coven is hard work."

"So I see. Hang on, maintained coven?"

"Oh, you can register a Coven without actually Joining together. It just says who you would join with. If you're actively Joined, it's called a maintained Joining. So our little Troika's unmaintained at the moment."

"Right, got it."

"We won't bother with a pop quiz this time."

"That's a relief. So, how much left?"

"Of today?" Lisa nods, "Not too much. Couple of extra bits. First off, Familiars."

"What?"

"Familiars. Animals used by Witches as agents. In reality, they're a weak form of Partnership. They're pretty much always maintained, and the animal really serves as a battery for the Witch. The Witch can also see out of its eyes, channel spells through it and take control of it. There are legends, which might or might not be true, about Witches living in their familiars for years after their original body died. It's one of the reasons the pets were killed of anyone convicted of witchcraft. Just in case."

"How many Witches died?"

"Almost none."

"Huh?"

"Think about it. They were Witches. How do you catch someone like that? Most of the people who died were innocent. Well, of that crime anyway. I mean, they caught some, sure, but..."

"Ok, what else?"

"Haven't finished with familiars yet. Some really scarily powerful witches took human familiars."

"What?"

“Human familiars. Same deal, but much more potent. Same rules, too. Very unequal Partnership. But those are really legends. You’d have to be insanely powerful to pull that off. Of course, witches aren’t the only ones who can manage it.

“Which brings us to the next fun topic: Warlocks. Also known as Oath-Breakers, Hellbound and Grade A Morons. These are the guys who trade in for more power, regardless of the cost. They hook up with powerful, well, things, and get a massive amount of power into the deal. All it costs them is their soul. And doing their patron’s wishes, which never seem to be good for the rest of us. Oh, and the eternity of slavery after they die. It’s not a great deal, hence why they’re Morons.”

“So devil worshippers?”

“Nah. These guys are those guys on steroids. These guys have actually found something that will respond.”

“And that’s allowed?”

“Not in the slightest. The Hellsings find any of these guys, they disappear.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. We’re talking in a South American way, too.”

“Oh.”

“Yup. Don’t mess with the Bastards in Black.”

“That it?”

“Almost. Just the Rule of Threes to go.”

“Rule of Threes?”

“The basis of how the community functions. Told you threes were a powerful magic. Rule 1 is simple, ‘Do as thou will but do no harm’. That one no one has much problem obeying, except it also means don’t do magic without permission which is more of a trouble. Rule 2, ‘A magician never reveals his secrets’. One Peter’s told you about a lot. You can’t let the Mundies find out about magic. Access is very carefully controlled and bringing people in is a big thing.”

“And yet you play all the time with your flatmate.”

“True, but you’re allowed to in relationships. Just be cautious with doing it as if they leave the relationship but aren’t part of the community, they need to forget that stuff. And the Conclave don’t hand out Neuralisers willy nilly. Failure to comply means the BiB are after you. Rule 3 is ‘Your word is your bond’. And we know all about how tricky that one can be. If you give your word, keep it. Technically, you can break a contract if it invalidates a previous, more important contract, but that’s very dodgy territory so don’t count on it unless you know what you’re doing. So for you, just don’t count on it.”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Oh, that’s another nickname. Come on, I’ve got to devise another punishment for you.”

“You are kidding.”

“Nope. That’s the point of today, to get you to really understand how much trouble you can get in if you agree without knowing the fine print. Or, in your case, the basic details.”

“Is insulting me at every opportunity part of that?”

“Yes and no. Yes, as it means you get mad and stop thinking, which is something you can’t afford to do.”

“And no?”

“Duh, you’re my big sister. Insulting you when you can’t do anything about it’s not going to happen every day, is it?”

“Marvellous.”

“Oh, grow up and take your medicine. You’ll know better next time.”

“Next time? You think there’s going to be a next time?”

Carrie smiles as she pulls out a tall metal frame, its flat top having a small hole in it, just big enough for a neck, and just at shoulder height, “Yup. This is just the basics course. We have advanced teaching to come.”

“Oh, goodie.”

“In you get, then.” Carrie slides the flat top apart to allow Lisa to fit her head through.

“No way.”

“Lise, your choice, but if you don’t, that’s two punishments. Eventually, you’ll owe me so many punishments, which can be pretty much anything, remember, that I’ll own you for life.”

“But...”

“And Peter will be obliged to help me enforce those punishments.”

“But...”

“So stop being a whiny little bitch and take your medicine.”

“Whiny?”

“Whiny. I’m being nice. I could make you do anything. Like, say, walk home Lady Godiva fashion. Actually, thinking about it...”

“You wouldn’t...”

“Get in and you won’t find out. Unless you misbehave again.”

With a good deal of bad grace, Lisa climbs into the frame. Carrie closes the stocks, locking them in place. “Is that really necessary?”

“No, but it makes you feel even more helpless, which you hate, so it’s worth it.”

“I really, really hate you right now.”

“Good. Concentrate on how you can get me back then. Just remember why you’re doing this.” She pulls out a thin steel plate, sliding it into the back of the frame.

“What are you doing?”

“Getting things set up.” She takes another plate and slides it in front of her sister, followed by two stretches of cloth along the sides.

“What does it do?”

“It’s a surprise.”

“Marvellous.”

Carrie stretches her hands out, putting one hand on each of the metal plates and pushes. They slide easily through the frame, crashing together underneath Lisa’s head. Carrie pulls the plates away, revealing Lisa’s flattened body flapping helplessly.

“You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?” Lisa scowls, her flattened body swaying in the frame below her, her head the only three-dimensional part of her.

Her sister beams down at her, dressed professionally, her long auburn hair tied into a bun.

“Obviously not. This is done purely for your own good. “

“You’d be more convincing if the Cheshire Cat didn’t want his smile back.” She sulks.

“It’s to illustrate a point. You did agree to it.”

Lisa’s scowl deepens. “How did I let myself get talked into this?”

“Because you’re not as stupid as you act and you finally realised how much trouble you can get into by blundering around without knowing the rules. Now, I’m sure I had some scissors lying around somewhere.” She grins, pats Lisa’s cheek and heads out of the room.

Lisa glares at the wall for several seconds, “Hey!! I thought you couldn’t use mundane objects to do magic with?!!”

“Well remembered!!” Carrie shouts back, the sounds of rummaging through the cutlery draw coming back. “Who said anything about magic?!”



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