

PETER AND LISA: PART 35a
♥TABBY♥: PART 1
TABITHA: PART 1
THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

"The doctor will see you now."

Tabitha looks up sharply, trying to ignore the jiggling this produces under her blouse. "Thank you." she purrs to the brunette behind the pale beechwood desk, smoothing down her knee-length black skirt. She leaves the pastel-shaded waiting room, her body automatically slipping into the catwalk sway that she despises almost as much as the breathy phone-sex voice. She pushes through the white door, the small brass plate announcing it to be the room of 'Dr Thomas Baker'.

The room beyond the door is as pastel as the waiting room, a large window overlooking the street below, mercifully shut against the autumnal chill. Shelves of thick, well-thumbed books lie along one wall, a large section curtained off. A battered hat and garish-knitted scarf the length of a football field rest alongside the dark coat on the coat rack. In the centre of one wall is a heavy oaken desk, a computer perched on one corner, papers in neat piles covering most of the rest, a small lamp on one corner. The man behind the desk gets up. His rail thin body is covered by a dark blue suit, a stethoscope peeking out of his jacket pocket. Dark curls fall over his shoulders, framing a large face of slightly exaggerated features, his dark eyes twinkling as he holds his hand out to her.

"Pleasure to meet you." he booms out, "You must be, ah..." he glances down at his notes, "Tabitha Smith." he smiles.

"That's right." She sits down carefully in the chair opposite.

"And according to this," he flips through his notes, "well, that is unusual. No wonder Mrs Drake sent you to me. Would you mind telling me what you see the problem as being? Notes are so dry and soulless."

Tabitha sighs, "The problem is I'm stuck in this body. I'm the ultimate teenage boy's wet dream. I can't walk without swaying my hips out. I can't move without jiggling. And I can't talk without it sounding like I should be charging a pound a minute on the phone. I should be a mousy little lawyer not a sex goddess."

"And the cause of this condition was?"

"An arsehole with a collar. A, oh, what was it called?"

"A Proetus Collar?"

"Yes, one of them. I spent 18 months under the control of that thing, nothing but a giggly sex toy. And even when I get freed, I still look like the stupid bimbo he made me! I can't even cut my stupid hair without it snapping back to this!"

"You can't?"

"No. I'm stuck like this."

"What I meant was that, even if you have been transformed permanently, mundane effects should still affect you."

Tabitha sighs, "They do, I guess. It just never lasts. I get it cut, dyed, straightened, the lot and before I'm even out of the hairdressers, it's back to a peroxide blonde mass of curls. I hate it!"

"Interesting. Now, you said you were freed from the Proteus Collar..."

"Yes."

"Could you tell me how?"

"It's...complicated."

"Candidly, Ms Smith, if it wasn't, you probably wouldn't have to see me about it."

"Were you there at Samhain?"

"Yes."

"Then you probably know what happened."

"Hardly. I know about the contest, of course. And that you were freed from the Collar as a result. But that doesn't explain your current situation. And that is what we're here today to deal with, is it not? So, what happened after you were removed from the Collar's influence?"

"Uhm, I was taken to a back room, and Peter tried to break the effect, but it didn't work."

"Hardly a surprise."

"Yeah. He wasn't surprised either. Then he got Lisa and her sister to hold hands with him and they were doing something, but it wasn't doing anything, and Mark came in and bam, everything went white and I was back like this. And they were all out cold."

"Yes, I had to treat them. Exhaustion, depletion of energies. Hardly that much of a shock. Overriding the work of a Proteus Collar is not something that can be done without consequences, if it can be done at all. They're probably lucky to have escaped with just exhaustion. To say nothing of the effects of breaking a troika like that. Very risky."

"R-risky? Are they going to be alright?"

"They should be. But at the moment, you are my patient, not them. So let us return to your problem." he fishes in his pocket, pulling on what look like a pair of optician's test glasses, "Now, let's see what we can see." he reaches up, fiddling with the levers, a pale white film forming across the lenses. He leans forward, peering at Tabitha, his face betraying extreme puzzlement. He pulls back, looking down at his hand. "Most odd."

"What's odd? What did you see? What are those things anyway?"

"Oh, sorry, yes." he pulls the glasses off, "These are a tool to help in my diagnosis. They show the flow of energy through a person so I can spot for eddies and the like."

"And what's odd about what you saw?"

"Well, to be frank, I have no idea. What I saw is completely impossible."

"Which was?" Tabitha presses, starting to get concerned.

"Nothing. Well, not exactly nothing, I can see the room just fine, but you don't appear. Which is quite impossible. Everything has some energy flow, even lifeless objects. A living, thinking, feeling being not showing up is just unheard of."

"Are you saying I'm not real?"

"Well, yes, I mean, no, I don't know. You're obviously real. Even an illusion disrupts energy flows somewhat, but you have no aura at all. No, that's not right, you don't even have an auric trace. As far as that instrument can tell, you not only don't exist but have never existed." he notes Tabitha's widening eyes, "Oh, no, nothing for you to be alarmed about."

"Really." she says sceptically.

"Absolutely. Although it will make treatment more difficult if my instruments can't register you."

"I...see."

"Most vexatious. Still, such things are sent to try us."

"So, what next?"

"Well, could you humour me and snip off some of your hair. I'd quite like to see this actually happen."

"You'd better do it. I can't see properly from here."

"Oh, of course. How silly of me." he walks behind her. "How much can I..."

"Take the whole thing." she shrugs, "It'll be back in a minute." There is a metallic snip as the scissors close and Dr Baker walks back to his desk, the bob of hair in his hand.

"How long does it usually..." he stops as Tabitha turns her head showing it's already been replaced, "my word. That was quick. What does it feel like?"

"It's kind of hard to describe. I don't really notice when it happens. I only knew it had snapped back because I was waiting for it. I didn't notice at the hairdressers till I saw myself in the window outside."

"I see."

"It seems to happen when no-one, including me, is paying attention and like that," she snaps her fingers, "I'm back to how I was before."

"Interesting. And your notes say magic doesn't seem to change you, either?"

"No."

"Can I ask what was tried?"

"To turn me back. Half a dozen of them tried, too. Even that fucking Collar wouldn't fix me."

"Will you permit me to try something regardless?"

"You're the expert."

"Good. Now, if you'd accompany me?" he walks towards a set of medical scales, a height chart fitted to them. "Now, if this device works, you'll be slightly shorter at the end of things. Only a couple of inches. Just enough to test."

"Ok." She steps carefully onto the scales, letting him adjust the wooden beam against her scalp.

"Ready?"

"Sure."

He pushes down and Tabitha winces as the wood presses against her scalp. "Hmmm. Interesting."

"What? What's interesting?"

"Let's sit back down."

"Ok, what is it?"

"It's very odd. There was no magic going on there at all."

"I noticed that." She rubs her scalp.

"No, I mean, there was no magic activated. It might as well have been a conventional device. Usually, the magic would be activated and then blocked but with you it doesn't even activate. As I said, it's..."

"Interesting?"

He looks up, "Exactly. There is something else I'd like to try, if you don't mind."

"What is it?" she asks sharply, "Sorry, I've learned not to agree to things sight unseen anymore."

"Ah, quite understandable. I want to put you to sleep for a few minutes."

"Why?"

"To see if the magic of the mind will still work on you."

"Why?"

"To test the limits of your condition."

"How long?"

"A few minutes. Certainly less than five."

"Ok. But only to sleep and nothing else while I'm asleep." She closes her eyes, settling back in the chair.

"Of course not." He closes his eyes, reaching out, and pulls back. "Interesting."

Tabitha opens one eye. "It didn't work, did it?"

"No. Well, more than no, actually. I've had some particularly strong-minded people prove impossible to put under, but you're different. It's like there's nothing there to affect. To all intents and purposes, as far as magic is concerned at least, you're invisible. It's like you're not there at all."

"And without magic, I can't be turned back." She says flatly.

"That would appear to be the case. Obviously, we would need to run lots more tests to be absolutely certain..."

"But I'm basically stuck as bimbo of the month."

"You're basically stuck in your current form, yes."

"Great. Just fucking great."

"It could be worse."

"Oh, that makes me feel a lot better. 'Cheer up, Tab. You might be stuck as a glassy-eyed blonde with tits like beach balls, but it could be worse.'"

"Well, you're still human; still the same gender you started with; still in one piece; your mind is intact; you're not in a coma that looks like it will last for the rest of your life; you're not under any form of compulsion; you still exist on the physical plane;..." he trails off. "As I said, I've been involved in cases where the prospects were not nearly so favourable. You are now an intelligent young woman with your whole life ahead of you. Is the package your personality resides in the be all and end all of you?"

"But it's not me!"

"It's not how you see yourself. Which is different. Very few of us have bodies that are how we see them. I'm afraid, unless we make unexpected progress, that your body is what it is and will be for what is likely to be a long life."

"So it's hopeless?"

"If what you hope for is to physically become the woman you were, then I wouldn't hold out much hope, no."

Tabitha sniffs, wiping her eyes, muttering under her breath.

"If you hoped to live a long happy life with a circle of people who will support you, however, I'd say you had excellent prospects."

She looks up darkly at him. "So that's it?"

"For now, that is it. I'd like to continue seeing you, to see if we can make progress in understanding your circumstances, if nothing else."

"I'll think about it."

"Yes, of course." He rises to shake her hand, "I wish you all the best and hope to see you in the future."

Tabitha nods, wiping her eyes again as she leaves the office.

Dr Baker sighs, and looks down at his notes. The intercom buzzes. "Tom, I have Hellsing on the line for you."

"Yes, I rather thought you might have. Patient confidentiality be damned, as usual." He sighs,

"Put him through, SJ. If some theories I have are correct, their anomaly may be even more dangerous than they think."



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