

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 76

RECONCILIATION?

The headquarters of the UK Assistants' Guild, "I'm coming, I'm coming. Why can't we have this meeting at my desk, again?"

"Reasons." Tabitha replies, approaching the meeting room, which is the only side room in the office.

"Well, as long as you're being clear and not at all mysterious."

Tabitha opens the door. Lisa walks in and stops dead. Sarah rises up of the uncomfortable plastic office chair. "Tab, what..." the door closes. A lock clicks. "Hey!!" she bangs on the door, "What gives?"

"You two need to talk. And I'm not letting you out until you've kissed and made up or killed each other."

"Oh, Tabitha, darling," Sarah replies, "I can do so much more interesting things than just kill."

"Don't care. Talk or fight, your choice, just settle things some way so this place can get back to working rather than drowning in drama."

"So..."

"So."

"Did you know she had this planned?"

"Not a clue, but I like her flair for the dramatic."

"You would."

"So, are we going to talk? Or fight?"

"Let's try talking first."

Sarah magnanimously gestures at the plastic chairs. "So, how are things?"

"Things are...not fine. And you know why."

"Because I had the temerity to punish your sister."

"Yes. No! Not that, just the punishment is..."

"More than you'd have thought."

"When we're talking, not finishing my sentences will go a long way to keeping this talking and not fighting."

"Noted."

"The punishment, it's...too much. Making her a thing? For four hundred fucking years?! That's too much for what she did, for anything."

"If I'd done that to Mark for what he did to Tabitha, would you be saying that?"

"Of course..."

Sarah raises an eyebrow.

"...I would...maybe, but he was abusing her and Carrie just...what even did she do that deserves this?"

"Couple of things. When she started poofing at random across London, we thought it was a genie incursion. That would be...serious. Genies are living magical nuclear weapons. They don't have the kind of built in limits about what they can do that magicians do. A genie could snap its fingers and, poof, London's populated by squirrels. No magician could even get close to that kind of power. There's an accord that the genies keep out of the affairs of the mortal world, and we do the same to them. So, that stunt put the whole magical world on DEFCON 2."

"She didn't know!"

"No. Probably not. But she still did it. Then, she has some kind of, I don't know, condition that means she can't control her magic. That risks exposing us to the rest of the world. She almost did it with the genie thing, and we don't know what or where or when the next outburst will happen. Can you imagine what would happen if she fell apart on the Tube?"

"Why would that be such a problem?"

"Because it would expose our existence! There's a reason we don't show everyone magic's real. If we do, bam, not only are we scapegoats for everything that goes wrong, but everyone and his dog

will be trying to bring us under their control or studying us like lab rats..."

"Like Carrie is now, you mean?"

"You don't get to interrupt me, either. If you're unhappy about her treatment, imagine what the normal world would do to us. People already treat every little difference like it's a capital crime, and being able to rewrite the laws of physics, even on a limited basis, is very much not a little difference! So we'd either be hunted, exterminated, or...we'd have to fight back and I'm not sure I want to imagine what that would mean. But it would not be good for anyone."

"Still, four hundred years..."

"Oh, I haven't got to the best bit yet. She also deliberately concealed this condition from us. She went to Dr Baker and flat out didn't mention the problem. So she's now wilfully endangering literally everyone. Four hundred years is too much? I've got the Bastards in Black crawling up my arse telling me the fact that she still exists is too much of a risk!! And I do not need to have to justify myself to you! I've bent things as far as I can to not overly punish your sister and it's still not enough! Well, I'm sorry that the world isn't accommodating enough for your family's antics, but I will not have you sticking all the blame for that on me! I am *trying* to help!"

"This is what happens when you're trying to help? I'd hate too see..."

Sarah scowls. "You know what, I'm not doing this. [Time out.](#)" Lisa stops in mid-rant. "So, what's all this about? I thought we'd agreed you'd accept this."

"The commands only specified I'd accept what Peter did to her. You're many things, but not Peter. So I'm free to get very mad at you, even if it's not wholly deserved."

"I caught that wholly. And if we amended that so you accept this was the best that could be done?"

"Well, I probably wouldn't get mad at you any more, but I'm pretty sure I'd transfer it to magical society as a whole."

"I can currently live with that. Do you agree to accepting this?"

"Yes, my Queen. [I agree.](#)"

"Good." she takes a deep breath to calm herself down, "[Time on.](#)"

"I know that! But Carrie, this is exactly what I'm supposed to be stopping here!"

"It's not that simple. Even you can't..."

"You don't understand! She's my little sister!! I'm supposed to keep her...I shouldn't let her get...I failed her and she..."

Sarah takes her in her arms, letting the tears drip onto her shoulder, "You're getting the dry-cleaning bill for the dress, you know. Tears and eye-liner is a bitch to get out."

"Shut up." Lisa sobs.

"That's it. Let it all out. I know you're a mess right now, so you don't have to pretend."

"A mess?"

"You're my friend. You think stable people will put up with me?"

"That's true, you overdramatic bitch."

"There's the Lisa I know and tolerate."

Lisa sniffs, breaking the embrace and wiping her eyes, "You love me really. Deep down."

"Maybe. But my love for you is so deep down, it talks about 'tinnies' and 'shrimp on the barbie' rather than civilised things."

Lisa snorts.

"Are we..."

"No. We're not good. I...understand why you did it. It was the best you could do, but...Carrie's still a thing. And that's not going to change, is it?"

"Not for a while, no."

"Four hundred years is a fucking long while."

"That is true. But..."

"Best you can do. I know. So, no, we're not good. But we're good enough."

"I'll take that." she bangs on the door, "Oh, jailer, we're...civilised, I guess."

"Close enough." the door unlocks.

"However, I don't think we can really countenance kidnapping of the royal personage."

Tabitha shrugs, "What are you going to do about it? All your power comes from magic, and magic doesn't work on me. And not only would I do it again, but you know I'm right."

"I could ask my newly re-established friend to discipline her wayward employee."

"Uh-huh. You could. But that would mean she'd be doing this all on her own. She's not crazy or angry enough to do that."

"She has a point there."

"And, she knows I'm right, too."

"Not so sure about that one."

"Tough. I am. Deal with it. And for God's sake, next time, fucking talk to each other!"

"Next time? Do you have any other sisters I should be worried about?"

"Don't make jokes. I'm still not happy about it."

"But you'll talk about it, right? Like adults?"

"That's asking a lot of some people."

"I am mortally offended by such an insinuation, Princess Chopped Liver." Sarah gathers up her dignity and walks out, head held imperiously high.

She snuggles closer to Peter on the couch, "It's...quiet."

"Too quiet?"

"Just...different. With Carrie away, it's just us."

"I can see why that would be a problem."

"Don't be daft, you arse. It's just...is she alright?"

"I'm sure SAT is taking very good care of it."

"Sure. I just bet they are. Nothing but the best treatment for their new magical toy. I don't trust that Mr Stone. So you'd better not sell her."

"I..."

"If the next words out of your mouth are anything other than 'Yes, of course I won't sell your sister to that arsehole', there will be trouble."

"Yes, of course I won't sell your sister to that arsehole." he replies flatly.

"Very good. Now if you can just stop referring to her as 'it'..."

"What..."

"I can accept this is...what has to happen, that she's a...that she's a thing for the community at large, but I don't have to like it and every single time you do that, it reminds me that..." she trails off, "...so just stop it, ok?"

"But..." he looks into her eyes, half steely anger and half on the edge of tears, "I'll try."

"Thank you." she sighs, letting out a stress breath.

"There is one good thing about Carrie not being here, though."

"Apart from peace and quiet? And a lack of sickly sweet pink vape smoke?"

"Exactly."

"Well, don't keep me in suspense..."

"No interruptions."

"No...ohhhhhh, no interruptions." she puts her arms around his neck, "Well, we should probably find a way to make use of that, hadn't we?" Peter smiles, "Just lose that whatever it was you were fiddling with when I came in." he drops the inflation stem onto the table and she pulls him down onto her.

A coffee shop in central London, Lisa sips at the coffee, her hands wrapped around it. An icy blast flows in from the door as a bulky figure hustles in. The only part visible are its dark eyes buried within a woollen cocoon. It approaches her table. "Noot?" Lisa asks in her best Pingu impression. The figure glowers and slowly, as the layers fall onto the table: woolly hat, scarf, gloves, thick thick jacket, Ola emerges. "I'll noot you, bish, making me come out when it's actual freezing! Your skinny Scottish arse might be used to this but I'm built for chasing lions on the savannah where, I might, remind you, there is no snow!"

“One, you're from Hackney. And two, Kilimanjaro?”

“That doesn't count, that's a whole-arse mountain. And I was speaking bout my genetics not me. So, what do you want?”

“I said I was sorry.”

“And you froze me out. Me, your best friend.”

“I told you...”

“Yeah, yeah, I know, I know, magicians have secrets and they don't trust anyone with them, but still, you never come out with me. It's always Peter stuff, or 'community' stuff, and...”

“I want you to be my Maid of Honour.”

Ola's mouth opens and closes, without making a sound. “For reals?”

“Who else would I have there?”

“What about your new bestie?”

“She's handling the reception.”

“Annnnnd?”

“And what?”

“And that's not the whole story. My gossip sense is tingling.”

“Ok, we had a falling out. It's...” she sighs, “...it's repaired but it's not the same and I realised...”

“...that you can only have one bestie and obviously I am the awesomest and best, so it had to be me?”

“Sure. I'll go along with your delusions.”

“Permission to eeee?”

“Hang on.” she puts the coffee down and places her hands over her ears. “Permission granted.”

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!!!”