

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 80
THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF THE GREAT MEPHISTO

Yuletide at Mister E's. Lisa opens her eyes as they emerge from the doorway, dressed up to party. "I still feel bad about leaving Carrie behind."

"She'll be fine."

"I know she'll be fine, Magic Boy. It's not like you left her with SAT." she sighs, "But I still feel bad about it."

"No maudlin talk tonight, Princess Chopped Liver. This is a happy time." Sarah says from the doorway, dressed in a flared Christmas tree green dress, decorated with red and gold baubles.

"Is it?"

"It better be. At least try. Now gimme your offering." she holds out her sack, shaking it.

"Yes, my Queen." he passes his hand over the mouth of the sack, dropping a rapidly expanding box into it.

"Very good. You may pass."

They enter the room, the table seeming longer than last year, despite three notable absences. At one end, opposite Stuart and Sarah's placements, sits a familiar figure with a high widow's peak of black hair. To one side is a small east Asian woman, sticks pushed through the bun of her black hair in a dark red kimono and a red-head in a plunging green dress trimmed in gold. To his right is a slender woman in a black dress with red streaks to match her long hair and white frills, a doll-sized chair on the table, occupied by an appropriately sized brunette, and a cat-girl, licking the back of her furry hand as Tom leans in to talk to her. "Peter, my boy. How are you doing? You remember Jo, Angie, Kat, Sandy and Rachel the actual cat."

"Uncle Mike? What are you doing here?"

He smiles devilishly, shaking Peter's hand, "You're looking at the new act of the House of Mister E."

"New act?"

Stuart shrugs. "With Mark...away, we've got a hole in our schedule."

"Which I am happy to fill in the off-season as a favour. I'll be staying at the Inferno, obviously, but our illustrious proprietor has been kind enough to provide dedicated travel. After all, as this city seems intent on stealing my team, so I might as well join them."

"That's unfair."

"Oh? Anne runs off with a handsome, and now absurdly rich, scoundrel, late of this parish, and his enterprise has laid a claim on Andi and Becky. Someone has to keep the others out of mischief." Tom's eyebrows raise. "Good luck with that." before turning his attention back to Rachel.

"I am aware of how difficult a task keeping assistants out of trouble can be. But so far none have gotten themselves into as much trouble as some."

Lisa stiffens as little as she takes her seat. She feels Peter squeezing her hand and bites back her comments.

"Ah, I've overstepped." he inclines his head towards Lisa, "My apologies."

"It's fine." she replies tightly, focusing on the empty space between her cutlery. "Are we having the same Christmas dinner as last year?"

"Of course, love. It's tradition."

"And the same drinks?"

"Volunteering?"

Lisa turns the full force of her glare towards Sarah. She takes a deep breath. "I...sure." she replies in the most aggressive agreement possible.

Sarah's mouth hangs open. "What?"

"I said sure. Magic Boy..."

"Are you sure?" he hisses as he reaches into his pocket.

"Not even slightly, but I'm committed now." she pulls down her dress, face burning with embarrassment, "Tap me." she grimaces as she feels the plastic edge press against her breast, the

bite of hard rubber clamps securing it in place and the sting of the catheter spike forcing its way into her nipple, "But the first person who so much as suggests drinking from the tap will be spending the holidays in traction. Clear?"

"As crystal, love." Tom replies seriously, passing his glass down the table.

The meal proceeds along its usual course, with Tom teasing Sarah incessantly until her roasted and prepared body is brought out and carved. Even Lisa doesn't protest this time, kept busy by the requests for liquor and struggling with the pleasant feelings the taps produce.

The Christmas pudding is likewise traditional, chatting happily away as she's set on fire and distributed around the table with copious ice cream or brandy butter according to preference.

After the meal has been cleared away, presents dished out and jokes told, things settle down, "Ok, the bar is now closed!" Lisa insists forcefully, trying to remove the stubbornly attached taps.

"Come on, love, just one more for the..."

She glares down the table.

"...guess not." he replies draining his current glass and reaching for the next as Peter twists the taps off Lisa's chest and she swiftly covers herself back up.

Sarah leans in very close, "I'm so proud of you, my little Elphaba." she whispers, "Keep on defying gravity."

Lisa grunts in response, adjusting her dress, to Sarah's amusement.

"Peter, can I have a word?" Mike asks, moving to stand over him.

"Sure. What's..."

"Are you quite sure you know what you're doing?"

"With what?"

"With...? Really? With what was your future sister-in-law, what else?"

"I'm quite sure."

"I see. So like your father, always quite sure as he plunges onwards. Do you even understand how many people think you've been given special treatment?"

"Special...? This is supposed to be something good?!" Lisa asks incredulously.

"Oh, yes. Most people in her, its situation would just vanish. And I'm sure you know that magicians are very good at doing a very thorough job of that."

"It's under control."

"Of course. Forgive me if I'm sceptical. It managed to cost me the twins' services while it was still human. I'm not sure that level of recklessness can be properly con..."

"It's being handled, Uncle Mike. It's not as if I asked for this solution."

"Not explicitly, no. But you are friends with..."

"Maybe if there was a proper system of laws, rather than the whims of powerful people, this wouldn't be a problem." Lisa replies tartly.

"I'd be careful with that tongue if I were you. The 'whims of powerful people' can turn against you rather quickly and even a friendship with the Keeper isn't a guarantee of protection."

"Are you warning us of something specific, Uncle Mike?"

"Just trying to look after my godson's interests. With your parents being where they are, someone needs to make sure you don't throw everything away on..." he stops himself.

"On what?"

"You know on what. Do you really want me to say it?"

"No, I think I've got the point."

"I wish I could be so certain, but you are your mother's child, through and through."

"Why thank you. I'll take that as a complement."

Mike shakes his head, "Stubborn as a goat."

"I got that from both parents."

"Don't I know that. However, I wonder if you really know what you're doing. Here, watch this." he opens an app on his phone. The screen shows a buxom woman laying forward on the bed, gazing up

at the camera from a tangle of auburn curls framing a heavily made up face that is, none the less, recognisably Carrie. She presses herself against the covers to preserve her modesty because the clothes she's not wearing certainly don't.

"Now, remember, all you naughty boys to tip so I can show you allllllll the good stuff." Carrie teases, kicking her legs up coquettishly, "And if you want to spoil me for a private session, I'll do what-ev-er you want."

"We know about that. Creep at SAT did some modific..."

"It's live." Mike replies evenly.

"It's WHAT?! That's not possible."

He points to the mark in the top corner, "Apparently it is. So, you can see why I'm somewhat sceptical over your ability to handle the situation."

"How? Magic Boy..."

"I don't know anything about this. Saz, we've got a family...situation. Sorry, but we've gotta run."

"Make sure it stays within the family. If she causes another incident, you're all for the chop."

"We will." he and Lisa start for the corridor.

Back in the flat, nestled in its cradle, the iCarrie sphere hums quietly as it connects to the internet through the WiFi. A light blinks against the camgirl setting as its digital persona continues its programmed function.