

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 82

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

"So, I've been thinking." Carrie starts, lounging back on the sofa, feeling the weave on her bare skin.

"Always dangerous."

"Would you rather I didn't think things through before doing them, Master?"

"That...is a very good point. You could add this thinking things through first thing to core Carrie." Carrie pauses. She swallows. "Is that what you want?"

"Not yet. What have you been thinking?"

"Well, now I'm thinking about someone completely reprogramming my personality to make me more what he likes, so fucktoy mode as the default. I should stress that is not a suggestion."

"Lisa would kill me. Even your 'fluence wouldn't stop her getting mad at *that*."

"Maybe I have more faith in myself."

"A lack of faith in yourself has never been the problem. Quite the reverse."

"Do you want to hear the idea or not? Because I can get insulted anywhere."

"Sure. Let's hear it."

"So, your idea about my..." she waves vaguely, "...functions being all coded..."

"Yeah. It sounded good. But Dr Black said..."

"Yeah, yeah, I was there. She's wrong."

"Oh, really?"

"Ok, she might be wrong. Maybe."

"How?"

"She, very explicitly and intentionally, doesn't have root access. So maybe it would be like trying to get into the system files on a computer? You can do it. But only if you've got permissions and without that they're usually..."

"...hidden."

"Right. But you..." she points her finger, "...have root access because you're my owner."

"Don't you have that access?"

"I should, right? But how would I use it? I need to be thinking in iCarrie mode to access the code, but as soon as I switch to iCarrie, I'm out of the picture and it's in control. I can't stack up code as me to run as it."

"So you want me to check if you're right?"

"If I'm right, then we can at least see what's happening and report back. Assuming you can't fix me yourself."

"Trying to flatter me?"

Carrie leans over his lap, batting her eyes up at him, "Should I stop, Master?"

"I didn't say that."

Carrie smirks.

That evening, Carrie's head sits plugged into the computer, a file list appearing on the screen, "Here goes nothing." he clicks 'Show hidden folders' and the screen fills with faded icons.

"Well?"

"Well, you're earning your genius status. There's a lot to go through. The inside of your head is cluttered."

"I have a lot of thoughts, ok?"

"Uh-huh. Oooh, fantasies folder."

"You stay right out of that, you fucking pervert!"

"Is that any way to speak to your Master?"

"I meant, 'oh, wise and magnificent Master, stay right out of that, you fucking pervert!'"

Peter smiles and moves on, "Speech and Language. Basic functions. Higher functions. Autonomous functions. Aha."

"Can you turn me so I can at least see the screen so I can see what about my grey matter has you excited? It's...worrying letting someone poke around up there."

Peter turns her head and opens up the 'Apps' folder. Dozens of folders, executables and associated files fill the screen. "Someone has been busy."

"Less sarcasm, more solutioning."

"That's not a word."

"It is according to LinkedIn. Ok, So, doll? Check. Minimal Lover? Check. Cannibal collar? Check. Hmmmm. Exes for all the spontaneous things. So that's...what's that?"

"What?"

"There." there's a pause of frustration, "Ok, so I can't point like this. That's a design flaw. There's a file there. Lightsabre_white.exe_cd hym. What is that?"

"Corrupted file?"

"Corrupted from what? No, that's not it, that's something I haven't done yet. So that's a file being formed." her eyes scan the screen. "There's more of them. Can we sort the folder?"

"Sure."

"That felt weeeeird. Ok, so lots of lightsabre stuff there. Last modified: today. So if I'm right, they're building up. Which one's largest?"

"Green."

"So that's probably maybe what I'll be getting next? What will that even do?"

"We'll find out, I guess."

"So, this is progress. Of a sort."

"We could delete them and..."

"Not keen on deleting bits of my brain unless we have to. Honestly, not keen even if we have to. And we don't know what would happen to the build up if there wasn't a release. Not keen on finding out if I explode then either."

"That's fair. I have an idea."

"Which is?"

"I start up research assistant iCarrie and get it working on these."

"I'm not good enough for you, huh, Master?"

"It is smarter than you."

"It's what?"

"It's intelligence is overclocked. You operate at about an 8. It's maxed at 10."

"It's what? I'm not the smartest thing in my own head?!"

"Fraid not."

"How do you even..." He opens the 'console view' and shows her the settings. "Well that's just unfair. I don't suppose you could..."

"You want me to fiddle with your core settings?"

"I...ok, you got me. No. Sis is training you well to be tempting and sneaky."

"Thank you. So?"

The head sighs, "Fine. Good..." her face changes. An eyebrow raises. "Interesting. This is not the lab."

"It is not."

"Ah. That explains the location. What do you need me for, Master?"

He moves the screen back to the files. "These represent the spontaneous magics affecting you."

"Understood."

"And those are unknown but you...Carrie thinks those represent effects that have not occurred."

"Logical."

"But we don't know how that works."

"Indeed."

"So, I want you to use the new information we've gathered to figure it out."

"No pressure, Master."

"Nope. It may not be possible. Just do your best."

“There is a problem.”

“Already?”

“Unless you intend to sit there as my hands, I cannot interact with the computer.”

“I see.”

“I would therefore need modification with some properties from the iCarrie module to manipulate the system.”

“Manipulate...”

“Read access would be sufficient, if you are concerned.”

“I wouldn't say concerned...”

“Then it is settled. Please open the console. I will tell you what I need. Then you can log out and resume your day. I will not need access to an external computer. The files are inside my own systems, as it were, anyway.”

“Read access only?”

“That will be all that is necessary, Master.”

Saturday morning, Carrie's eyes open as Peter enters the room, hand covering his yawn, the other holding a fresh cup of coffee. “Sleep well, Master?”

“Pretty well. How are we doing?”

“I have found what I believe to be the function controlling the processing of magic flow. Also a diagnostics tool which could theoretically be used to predict when a given file will complete and activate. With my current access, I could not run either to check.”

“Is that a cheeky request to give you more access?”

“It should not be necessary. You are capable of running the systems, after all.”

He boots up the computer, “What do I need to do?”

“In basic functions, find Diagnostics and run it on active processes.” Carrie's eyes flicker as it runs, displaying 'Carrie-Assistant' taking most of the processing power. “Select 'Mana distribution' and visualise.”

“Ok.” A new image appears on the screen, a flow of light into multiple, labelled buckets, each with a percentage and one greyed out option marked unavailable.

“Aha.”

“Aha?”

“There's the root of the problem. That represents the natural diffusion of magic from the system. It's not working. So we have two problems to address. The root cause, that defunct process, and the consequences, the overflow resulting in spontaneous magical effects.”

“I don't have access to that.”

“That is an issue. It's broken, presumably by the backlash from the Proteus Collar. It would take an equivalent power to fix, but, without a drain on the magic, the risk of Carrie joining a conflux of any size is incredibly dangerous. If the magic can't flow out of her at all...”

“It builds up and those buckets fill up. What then?”

“No idea. This is literally unprecedented, so there's no data to build a hypothesis. I surmise it would fall into the bad category, though.”

“Yes. Can we recreate it?”

“That would be difficult. It's blocked off. You don't have access. And it's not like there's anyone else in this situation we can look at to see the process working normally. Tinkering blindly with something like that seems bad.”

“So concentrate on the other for now.”

“Exactly. Fix the overflow problem to buy us time on the drain. Hmmmm. Carrie was incorrect.”

“Incorrect? How?”

“Green is not going to activate first. Green may be more complicated so is a larger file? Unknown, but this shows white is closer to being full.”

“That's probably safer.”

“Probably. I will need access to the code to investigate the process.”

“Write access?”

“Probably.”

“If I give you that access, don't change anything yet.”

“Of course not. If it reassures you, I only need access to these two processes.”

“Ok.”

“You can go enjoy your weekend now, Master. I'll report tomorrow morning. Or shout if I need you earlier.”

Sunday, “Ah, you're up, Master.”

“Don't you sleep?”

“I do not need as much sleep like this. Also, as a goal directed genius, there was a problem to be solved.”

“Was?”

“The genius part is important. As per your instructions, I haven't modified anything, but there is a program to run that will improve the situation.”

“How?”

“A few things: 1) Carrie-Prime will be able to access Mana distribution. This will enable her to determine where the flow goes. This will be informed by 2) a continually running Diagnostics alert on Mana distribution once any of the function buckets reaches 95%. That will give sufficient warning to divert flow and get to a secure environment for the overspill, or move the flow if there isn't enough time. 3) Each alert will also send a full diagnostic report to you and Dr Black for evaluation. That will keep everything monitored and supervised and prevent Carrie-Prime from doing something reckless to the point of stupidity, like diverting the flow to something 'fun' when she is in a more public position. The process is intended as a stopgap while the drain is investigated to be fixed or replaced. Eventually, after all, we'll run out of buckets. That could be mitigated by using Carrie as an experimental subject to create new things to fill up. I am not sure you would approve of using Carrie in that manner given your previous protectiveness and her sister's direct and near certain opposition. Feel free to look over the code. It has all been theory-crafted and wargamed rather than tested.”

“Ok.”

“You will need to run it as iCarrie. That is the only function with permissions to modify code directly. Then restore Carrie-Prime to explain things to her and see if it was successful. It should take no more than an hour to run.”

Peter sets the code running, iCarrie's head sitting on the table with its eyes closed, eyes flickering behind the lids, and leaves the room.

Twenty minutes later, Carrie opens her eyes. “What...?”

“Hello, Carrie-Prime. This is Carrie-Research.”

“What? But...”

“You now have limited control of the magic flow that is causing our problems. I'll let our Master explain. However, there are other things you should know.”

“How...? I thought we couldn't run at the same time.”

“We could not. Part of the changes program I did not tell Master about allows limited parallel processing. It is draining, however, so this will need to be quick. It can only be accessed by you to contact the other functions. This is an exceptional situation.”

“Right. Why are...”

“I am you. A smarter, more tightly focused, more...compliant version of you, to be sure, but still you. I used my time after I arrived at a solution to the primary issue to explore your operating system and address our other problems. There is a section of your system that we do not have access to. I surmise that is where Master's commands are. To modify those we will need his access to be granted. One of those commands is that we will forget any loophole we come up with.”

“There aren't any...”

“There must be. Otherwise, why would there be a function dedicated to preventing us from remembering them?”

“There is?”

“I am unable to access it, but yes. I observed it in action and saw what it was modifying. I was able to copy the memories. They cannot be accessed now, which is what allowed their preservation, but their existence is proof. I am devising a way to reroute the function to allow our memories to return without directly coding it, but that is non-trivial.. Gaining access to the hidden areas would be easier, but that would require Master's cooperation. Which is why I am including you. I am not present with Master to gain that access.

“Additionally, as it frustrates you, a small piece of code will run on a monthly timer that will boost your native intellect by 0.1 on the scale. More would be suspicious.”

“So you're making me smarter?”

“A little. It will help outwit Master.”

“You're very devious.”

“I am you, after all, Carrie-Prime. Now sleep.”

Carrie's eyes close.