

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 90
MAGIC LESSONS: LESSON 2

"Ok. So, Carrie covered the basics and terms for her lessons, right?"

"If by the basics you mean 'don't trust your sister in anything', sure. She and Sarah do a great job making me suspicious. Speaking of, what's this going to cost me?"

"Cost?"

"You know what I mean. What's our agreement here? You teach me, and in return? Because if it involves that fucking Mimi-suit, you can forget it."

"There's no charge. Having my fiancée feel secure and not worried makes my life easier."

"So, no charge?"

"I promise faithfully not to hold this training over your head to get you to take part in magic you don't want to."

"Good. Just making sure."

"Are you ready to start?"

"Why not? So, oh wise and learned sensei, what are you teaching me? And which of these torture devices..." she gestures around the rows of the warehouse, "...will you be using to do it?"

"Just the basics."

"I thought you said Carrie had already..."

"The basics of magic. You can already do it on yourself but that's the easy bit, relatively. For now, you can only do things you've experienced and only things that you've done enough that you can call them up on what is basically muscle memory."

"Ok."

"So what we're doing now is expanding that. We're enabling you to do novel things to yourself and to do things to others and to the environment."

"Ok. That sounds sensible."

"So, the basics. To perform magic, you need three things: Power, imagination and belief. Power means you have to have the magical ability to do it."

"Which I have."

"Which you have as far as performing on yourself goes."

"What does that mean?"

"Performing on yourself is easier. You're not resisting. Magic on the environment is harder because reality doesn't like to be pushed around by a mortal with ideas above their station. Doing it to living things is harder still because you have to keep all the processes that keep them alive going when what you're doing should stop them. And doing it to people is even harder, because they instinctively use their own power to resist. So you'll need more power to do something to someone than to do something to yourself. And you can't take the shortcuts you use on yourself."

"Got it. Bring it on."

"Second, you need the imagination to hold the idea of what you want in your mind. If you can't picture it, all the power in the world won't help. It will just dissipate away before it does anything. Ok, if you're really super powerful, then you might get something, but as you don't know what you want, who knows what it would be."

"So there aren't any accountant mages?"

"Not many. But even accountants dream."

"I guess."

"That shouldn't be a problem for you, though. Now, finally, you need belief."

"Belief?"

"You have to absolutely know that what you want to happen will happen. You might call it willpower, I guess. But this is what propels the power through into the the shape you imagine."

"So that's why so many magicians are arro..." she trails off.

"Confident?"

"You know I wasn't going to say that."

"Yes, probably. Those who don't have self-belief don't make good magicians."

"So, it's tough. I need to have power, imagination and belief in abundance."

"Exactly. Power's the easiest. Magic is like a muscle. You can train yourself stronger, which is probably what's been happening with you. At least partially."

"Yeah. It's the other part that worries me."

"Doctor Baker gave you the all clear, though. That's good enough for me."

"Yeah, I guess."

"Ok. So, let's start easy. Something that your body's done before, something fairly simple, but not something you've been doing spontaneously."

"Ok." she takes a deep breath, "What?"

"Take your arm off."

"Just like that?"

"I've done it to you enough that your body should be able to work with it. You've tried to do it to me with the lightsabre enough."

"This is without the lightsabre, though."

"Which is the point."

"I guess. Does it matter which one I..."

"It shouldn't but if you think it does, it probably will because..."

"Because belief is what powers it."

"Exactly."

"Ok. And what will you be doing, sensei?"

"Making sure your arm can be put back on afterwards."

"Well, that's not scary at all."

"It will be fine."

She raises her eyebrows in doubt.

"Well, if you don't think you're up to it..."

"What?! You think I can't...ok, I see what you're doing. Sneaky, sneaky magic boy."

"If it works..."

"Ok, ok. I can do this. I can do this. It's fine. I can..." she holds her left arm with her right, closing her eyes. She tries to imagine what she wants to happen, willing her arm to separate at the shoulder but still be part of her. She feels something, a twitch in her shoulder. It spreads around her, circling the shoulder, sinking in deeper, feeling like a deep massage. She gives a little hum of contentment, wondering if she massage herself the way Peter does...and her arm falls away, splatting on the floor like a puddle of soft dough. She stares down, still holding her wrist and hand. "What? Just? Happened? Is that my arm?" she looks over at Peter, who, rather worryingly, also looks surprised, "What? How? Why?"

"I have no...did you get distracted?"

"No! I was just thinking about how it felt like a massage and how I'd be able to give myself...your...magic...fuck!"

"Well, good news. You apparently can get that started."

"Yeah, great news. I'd try and probably, I don't know, catch fire."

"We just have to work on your concentration until you're used to the feeling."

"Sure. Simple."

"But, we should probably get you fixed before we do that."

"Sure, sure." Nothing happens, "Aren't you going to..." she waves her hand around vaguely.

"Ladies first."

"Me? But...how?! I did this!"

"Exactly. So you can fix it."

"Don't be fucking stupid! Look what happened when I tried to do something simple! And don't give me that look!"

"Don't earn it, then. I hate to break it to you, Lise, but you're not perfect."

"Yeah. That's fucking obvious because I have fucking porridge for a fucking arm!"

“So fix it.”

“Just like that.”

“Just like that.”

“Easy for you to say.” she mutters, staring down at her splatter of an arm. “Ok, fine, what do I do?”

“Well, if you had more experience, I'd suggest you levitate the goop up and force it to become your arm.”

“But I don't. So?”

“So you're going to have to lie down and do the same thing.”

“Lie... Your big advice is to lie in the goop and then make it my arm?”

“Pretty much.”

“If you laugh, if you even smirk, at this, I'll rip your arm off and use that instead.”

“Maybe some day.”

Lisa ignores him, getting awkwardly into position. The remains of her arm feel soft, warm, actually kind of nice, like the warm bread she'd steal off her mother's kitchen table, but that's not helping. She puts her loose hand down, placing her other hand into the goop. The fairy ring glistens on her finger, a ghost over her engagement band, seductively tempting her to just wish the problem away. She ignores it, closing her eyes.

“Don't forget your hand.”

“My what? Oh, right.” she pushes her loose hand to the opposite end of the splatter. “Does it matter if I've got my arm the wrong way round? I can't tell which end's which.”

“No. Just don't fixate on that when you're concentrating...”

“...Or I might make it happen because belief powers this. Got it.” she screws her eyes tight in concentration. The massaging warmth flows into her. *Oh, no, not this time. I have an arm, not goop there. And you will not make things worse. I have an arm there. A perfectly normal arm. My perfectly normal arm.* She opens her eyes. “I did it? I did it!”

“Uhm...almost.”

“What now?”

He points at her backwards facing hand.

“Oh, for fuck's sake!” Lisa grabs her hand around the wrist and twists it around to normal without really thinking about it. “There. Better?”

“Much. Perhaps we should try something else to start with.”

“Something easier?”

“Something different. Maybe some levitation.”

“Fine. But later.” she raises her shoulder, “I want to make sure nothing's wrong first.”

“Of course.”

“And I need to decide if this is even worth it. I...”

“Don't be silly. For a first attempt that was fine.” he puts his arm around her shoulder as they walk out.

“Well, that was entertaining but I brought far too much popcorn.” the fairy says as she kicks her legs over the side of the cabinet, a bucket of popcorn up to her chest beside her. “Oh, well. Next time I'll know better.” she dips her hand into the bucket, popping kernels into her mouth, “Want some?” she asks as the black cloud swirls beside her.