

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 93

MAGIC LESSONS: LESSON 3

Lisa lies back on the bed, the lights sparkling above her. They stay still, forming a neat diamond. She closes her eyes and the lights scatter like starlings around a hawk. She sighs, opening her eyes to impose order on the chaos again. "I am never going to get this to work. And this is the easy part!" she looks at her ring, "And you're no help. You'd think having a magic wishing ring would make things easier! I could just wish to be able to..."

"Probably. I can think of two, no, three ways that would go wrong off the top of my head, but, you absolutely could."

Lisa turns. "You've got a warning system if I say 'wish', haven't you?"

"No. Of course not. The very idea. Why would I do that? Maybe."

"So, does my fairy not-godmother have any advice on this?"

"On what, specifically?"

The lights gather back into pattern. "On them. Peter's told me I need to be able to keep them under control before he'll teach me more."

"And it looks like you have, so what's the problem?"

"I can control them just fine. But if I stop actively thinking about controlling them..." the lights scatter, swirling around the ceiling.

"Well, obviously. What did you think would happen?"

"What?"

"You stopped concentrating on them. Of course, they're going to react to your subconscious instead. And no one's subconsciousness is that organised."

"So how does Peter expect me to..."

"I told you he wasn't a great teacher, didn't I? Peter can make those lights stop when he stops concentrating because he'll set them up like that. He wouldn't necessarily think he's doing it like that, but it's not as easy as all that for most of us."

"So you're saying I can't do what he says I have to?"

"Well, you might be able to. But it's more complicated. You have to program the lights. Now, to someone like Peter, someone logical and analytical, that probably comes more naturally than it does to you. However, that's not the real issue, is it?"

"Oh, do tell. What's the real issue? I'll add it to all the advice I've got that isn't at all contradictory."

"Still as rude as ever, I see," she mutters, "Let me guess, Peter's told you all about the triangle of magic: The Will, the Power and the Desire."

"Something like that."

"And he doesn't realise you've already been doing this, does he?"

"What?"

"Oh, you didn't realise it either. Well, I suppose with him being more experienced, I can see how that would..."

"How *what* would?"

"Sorry. You got me nattering. Talk the hind legs off a donkey, or so my husband says when he's living dangerously. So, your little lightsabre?"

"What about it?"

"That's you doing magic."

"It's what?"

"It's you doing magic. It provides the template, but you provide all the power, and you know that it will work. Most assistants couldn't use it. But for you it's almost second nature."

"So..."

"So, what I'm saying is, Peter's teaching you how to do things the way he does. One step after another. A programmer's guide to magic. And that's not how you think."

"So why does it work for him?"

"Because it is how he thinks. And because that's how he believes magic works, that's how it works for him. You don't think like that. For you, magic is more emotional, more intuitive, more....chaotic. Just like you."

"Chaotic?!"

"Knew you'd focus on that. I just mean you don't need to have the magic down to the last jot and tittle. You just have to know what you want and make the slippery twisty-turny bastard that is magic do what you bloody well want it to."

"I don't..."

"Peter's magic is methodical. A to B to C. Step by step. He makes it an inevitable chain of if-thens to get it where he wants. You can't do that. You can't hold all the steps in your head. So stop trying to do it that way, and just do it."

"Easy."

"Simple, not necessarily easy. But you need to stop thinking like you are and think like you always do. You don't know how you're going to get to your goal, but you know what it is and you are damn well going to get there, come Hell or high water."

"I..."

"Tell me I'm wrong, dear. Go on."

"I...fine, you're probably right. So how..."

"I just told you. You humans never listen properly. Go all Nike on the problem and just do it. Don't worry about the how or the why, just the outcome."

"Why not? I've tried almost everything else." her left hand drops onto the bed, leaving her wrist smooth and covered in skin before she's even raised it to look at it. "I...I..."

"Probably best to make sure you can bring it back before you start doing bigger things, dear."

"Probably." Lisa picks up her hand, feeling her fingers on her palm as if it was still attached. She places it back against her wrist, her hand covering the join and when she lets go her hand is still there, no sign of the join, just as if it had never happened. "I did it."

"You did. See? Just stop fighting yourself and it all works smoothly."

Lisa nods, half-listening as she squeezes her hand, watching this time as it deforms like clay, squeezes and collapses into itself until it's gone, her wrist as smooth as if she'd cut it off.

"Very dramatic, dear. Can you bring it back? That's always the real trick. Any fool can saw someone in half, after all. It's only magic once she can walk out of there."

Lisa puts her hand around her empty wrist, thinking about what to do. She pulls, and slowly drags her hand back out into reality. She flexes her fingers to make sure they're all working.

"Well, I think you've got the hang of it. I'll just be on my way."

"Not yet. I want to try something first."

Lisa closes her eyes. The lights dim and suddenly brighten, showing through her eyelids. When she opens her eyes, the fairy is wearing a tiny pair of slightly oversized sunglasses in the bright light.

"A little warning next time you decide to go supernova would be welcome, dear."

"Sorry, I guess. Can you do me a favour?"

"A favour? From little old me?" her grin spreads until it's almost splitting her head in two, "Haven't you heard how bad an idea it is to trust fairies?"

"A little favour. With a little cost."

"How little?"

"Look, I'm just going to go outside, do some normal things. Five minutes tops. I just want to make sure those don't move. And if I'm watching them obsessively..."

"Five minutes. Not one second more."

"Great. I'll just..."

"Ahem. There is the matter of my payment for this task."

Lisa stops, "Which is?"

"An invitation. To your wedding. For me and my plus one."

"You? At the wedding? With my...with all those people who don't know fairies exist?"

"Oh, don't worry, dear. I'll be terribly discrete."

"You being terrible at it is exactly what I'm worried about."

"I will have you know I can comport myself with absolute discretion as well as style should the situation demand it. Don't give me that look, young lady. I promise faithfully not to cause trouble." she says seriously crossing her finger over her heart.

"Or let your plus one cause any."

"Or let that big brute cause any, either. You won't even know we're there."

“Just as long as no one else knows you're there, either.”

The fairy holds her fore and middle fingers up, pressed together, “Brownie's honour.”

Lisa stares down at her, “Fine. You can come.”

The fairy holds out a tiny hand to shake on it. Lisa takes it gingerly and walks out the room, looking over her shoulder at the hovering, and stationary, lights.

The fairy leans back, kicking her heels. “You might as well come out, dear. I know you're there.”

Darkness bubbles out of the corner of the room, a cloud of shadow drifting into the lights, red eyes looking down at her. **“Why are you encouraging her? Again?”**

“Why not? She'll get there on her own. This just means less tension. Besides, I got us an invite to her wedding.”

“Which you were going to attend regardless.”

“Of course. It's not every day you get to see your children get married, now, is it?”