

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 95
'UBBER

Backstage at the House of Mister E, "...can you talk to Dini?"

"Why me?"

"He's not listening to me! And if I have to tell him 'no' one more time, I'm going to staple the word to his forehead!"

"Well, I wouldn't want open hostility between our representatives of magicians and assistants, now, would I?"

"Thank you." Lisa sighs in relief.

"You're welcome. Now, as you're here..."

"Uh-oh."

"Nothing bad. We do need to schedule a performance from you and Peter, but I understand that you're both a bit busy at the moment to practice."

"Just a bit."

"Which brings us to the next thing to talk about."

"Uh-huh."

"What are we doing for your hen night?"

"I have no idea."

"Really?"

"O's organising it and she refuses to tell me anything. Except to reassure me that I'll love it."

"I see. And what are you expecting?"

"Lots and lots of baby-oiled hunks with rippling muscles."

"Well, I can't say I'm totally opposed, but she has also said it will take all weekend which makes me..."

"Suspicious?"

"Curious."

"Oh, it must just be me who's suspicious of what she's up to."

"Well, that does fit."

"Was there anything else her Majesty wanted? Or just to insult me?"

"Just one thing."

"Yeeeeessssss?"

"Oh, you're so suspicious."

"Uh-huh. Like you haven't given me cause. So, Columbo, what is this just one more thing?"

"Nothing serious, I promise. I'm just curious how your training is going."

"It's going."

"That well, huh?"

"The floating thing is what's currently driving me nuts."

"Oh?"

"Simple, right?"

"I wouldn't..."

"Anyway, when I try to lift something or grab it, my arm shoots out to do it instead."

"Your arm..."

"Watch." she looks around, finally spotting a plastic bottle sitting on the counter. "Now, Peter would just float that over, but not me. I have to do things the hard way, don't I?" her arm catapults across the room, grasping the bottle and pulling it back.

"That's still pretty impressive."

"I guess."

"So you're stretchy now?"

"Uh-huh." Lisa says suspiciously.

"Bouncy like rubber?"

"I don't..."

"You should try that. It's wonderfully liberating to bounce around a place."
 "Maybe. Where's this leading?"
 "There's something at the back of my mind that's just not...oh, there it is." she clears her throat,
 "The Wonderful Thing About Lisa, by Sarah Drake, with assistance from AA Milne..."
 "What are you..."
 "The wonderful thing about Lisa..." she starts in the cadence of Tigger.
 "...talking..."
 "Hush. This is art." she starts again, "The wonderful thing about Lisa
 "Is Lisa's a wonderful thing.
 "Her bones are made out of rubber
 "Her butt is made out of springs."
 "You leave my butt out of..."
 "She's Bouncy,
 "Flouncy,
 "Trouncy,
 "Pouncy,
 "Fun, fun, fun, fun, FUN!!!
 "But the most wonderful thing about Lisa is
 "That there's only one
 "Thank fu..." she pauses to self-censor, casting glances at the child bouncing along to her singing,
 "...God there's only onnnnnnnne!"
 "Are you done?"
 "Am I done? Yes, I think so. For now anyway."
 "Mummy sing! Mummy sing!" Grace's hands struggle to clap.
 "Well, you've got one fan. Although I think she might be a smidgen biased."
 Sarah lifts Grace up, "Don't you listen to your mean Auntie Lisa, Bug. You keep on appreciating talent." Grace giggles and squirms, seemingly both enjoying and objecting to being held at the same time.
 "Annisa! Annisa!" she struggles, reaching out towards her.
 Lisa takes the squirming child, Grace wriggling in her grasp. "Hey, Bug. How are you doing?"
 "Annisa! Annisa! Ubber! Ubber!"
 "She means rubber. She wants to see her stretchy Auntie."
 "Is that what you want, Bug?" she leans in closer. Stubby fingers grip her nose, giggling as Lisa pulls back, her nose stretching out. "Did id not ad fun for be ad it id for her."
 Sarah grins. "Art is suffering."
 "Nod an ardid."
 "No, your an Auntie. You take the strain off me for a bit."
 "Lubly."
 Grace's grip slips, Lisa nose stinging back as it returns to her face. "Again! Again!"
 "How about something better?" She breathes out, her fingers stretching out, wrapping around Grace like a harness. She stretches her arm to the floor and Grace immediately toddles off, stretching her arm further.
 "You're getting very comfortable with this."
 "Thanks." she glances down her arm as Grace bends her arm against the table leg. "Feels a bit weird, but also natural."
 "You're becoming one of us."
 "Apparently."
 "No denial? You really are changing."
 "Don't make too much of it."
 "How can I not? I'll get you a commemoration cake."
 "Wonderful." Grace continues her toddle, tangling Lisa's arm up around the table legs. "Is it ok if I let her go? Before she actually ties me into a knot."

"She should be fine. There are two responsible adults in the room, after all."

"Two? I'm not sure I count one." she relaxes her grip on Grace who toddles out from under the table.

"Ubber?" she turns, her eyes following Lisa's hand as it whips back along its convoluted path.

"Ubber! Want ubber!"

Lisa's hand flails back, knocking the bottle off the table. "Sorry. I'll get that." she stretches down, staying seated on the high stool. Grace toddles towards her hand as Lisa pats at the floor to find the bottle.

"Maybe you're getting a bit too comfortable with this."

"What?" she looks up.

"Got to be careful you don't do that in public."

"I'll be good."

"Of course. Has Peter taught you anything about normalcy filters yet?"

"What filters?"

"So no. Make sure he does. That will help."

Meanwhile, with all the feral grace of a hippopotamus, Grace toddles towards her prey.

"What do those..."

"They're not something most assistants need to worry about. More magician territory."

"But?"

"But you are powerful enough, apparently, that you're starting to treat magic as normal, natural, even instinctual."

"So how do these..." she waves her free hand around for emphasis, "...filters work?"

"They help people accept that things are normal. They won't stop something truly outrageous from getting noticed, which also isn't a concern for most assistants, but it will..."

Lisa yelps as Grace pounce-flops onto her hand, her mouth clamping down. "Sharp!"

"Grace! What did I say?"

Grace's response is muffled by the rubbery flesh in her mouth.

"Grace!"

Grace spits out the arm. "No daggin teef." she mumbles.

"That's right. No dragon teeth."

"Sowwy."

"Dragon teeth?"

"She has very sharp little teeth. Makes teething hell for everyone concerned. But she's a good bug and keeps them less pointy, don't you, Bug?"

Grace smiles her gap-toothed smile, her teeth gleaming but not especially sharp.

"Yes, just like that. She needs to keep her instincts up as well."

"Ubber?" Grace asks hopefully, lifting up her arms.