

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 97  
BACK TO NORMALCY

Sunday night, "How did your hen weekend go?"

Lisa drops her bag, "Don't ask."

"That..."

"I said, don't ask."

"And you clearly didn't mean it. So..."

"I fucked up, ok?!"

"You...how did you fuck up your hen weekend?"

"I lost control."

Peter suddenly looks serious, "You...how?"

"I was being massaged. And I just..." she waves her hands, "I just...collapsed. Like when you massage me. Only..."

"You collapsed? And the masseur...well, obviously they did, you can't exactly hide that."

"Oh, I haven't got to the best part yet. I did...something, and everyone treated it like it was absolutely normal for a guest to be massaged into a tennis ball."

"Normal? Everyone? What do you mean everyone?"

"I was with Tab and..."

"Tab was affected?"

"No. But only her. Even I was affected."

"You? What do you..."

"I thought it was normal. So I thought I was 'supposed' to be a ball. I didn't change back. Why would I? I thought being a ball was right."

"You don't look much like a ball."

"Funny. Tracy fixed me."

"Tracy?" he asks incredulously.

"Yup. Apparently she's getting good at ignoring normalcy."

"How is she...?"

"She's running Osbourne's club."

"She's...ok. There's a lot to unpack here. How did Sarah react?"

Lisa looks away

"You have told her, haven't you?"

"In my defence, Ola was around all the time so there wasn't a good..." the phone handset shoots across the room into Peter's palm like it had been shot from a gun.

"Call her. Now."

"What?"

"Now." he repeats.

"Ok, ok, I'm phoning her, ok?"

A very short, very loud conversation later, "Well, good news, I'm not going to be imprisoned."

"Good."

"I am in the shit, however. Deep in it."

"How bad?"

"Well, she wasn't happy that I didn't tell her immediately, but, you know, Ola, so she's bought that excuse, and no one noticed, so nothing's gone actually wrong, but..."

"But it's starting to be a pattern?"

"Yeah. She's marking my file as 'trouble. Not as much trouble as the other one but trouble.' I don't think that's going to lead to anything, not really, but you know, it's looking like it's an option to be considered. Before, I don't think it was. Now?" she shrugs.

"Ok. Now, talk me through what happened."

Lisa sighs, "So..."

One explanation later, “So, now you know as much as me. What do we do?”

”There are two problems to...”

”Just two?”

”Just two. One, how you affected even yourself with the normalcy. That’s, look, normalcy’s supposed to take the edge off things, give people plausible deniability that what they’re seeing is real. This...is way more than that. Two...”

”You’re just moving on from one, huh? Really reassured now, Magic Boy.“

”Two, you started melting away first. That one’s easier to deal with.”

”Oh?”

“Just practice. Some massage sessions that don’t lead to you being compacted. Break the link between your expectations and your magic so you don’t automatically ‘give in’.”

”Ok, I guess. Not all the massages though, right?”

”Not *all* of them, no.” he smiles, “And get you used to not using magic again. We might have gone too fast on your training. You must have been getting so good at using magic that it outpaced your ability to control it.”

“Super-powerful assistant Lisa strikes again.”

”Which is also probably why your attempt at making things normal went too far.”

”Way too far.” she agrees.

”So we’ll need to add that to your training, too.”

”Is that safe? Won’t I just make you think everything’s normal until I know what I’m doing? I mean, I affected me.”

”Probably not. I’ll know you’re doing it so I’ll be prepared. I doubt you’ll be able to affect me like that if I’m ready for it.”

”I don’t especially want to make myself think some of the things we do are...the real me like I did with the massage.”

”We’ll keep it small, extra fingers, hands on backwards. I won’t be getting you to normalise any of our fun things until you’re ready for it. Besides which, this time you panicked and overcorrected. When you’re used to doing it, that shouldn’t be as much of a problem.“

“Ok.”

”And now, we move onto our third problem.”

”I thought you only had two.”

”I only had two with you.”

”So what’s the third one? Our standing with her Majesty?”

”No, we’ll deal with that. It’s Tracy.”

“What’s Tracy?”

”The problem.”

”Because she works at...”

”Runs.”

”Fine, fine. Because she runs Osbourne’s place?”

”No. Not that. It’s just...you owe her. A lot.”

”A...how much is a lot? I don’t owe her a life debt. Do I?”

”You do not. But you do owe her and I think we can both guess what she’ll want from you.”

”Do tell, Poirot.”

”Your help freeing Carrie.”

”And that’s bad because?”

”Really? Apart from pissing off Sarah, possibly getting the Bastards involved, and letting Carrie loose before she’s ready?”

”Ok. So maybe it’s complicated.”

“Lise...”

”Oh, the warning voice.”

”Please don’t just agree to do something for her. Even if she says it will cancel the debt.”

"Well..."

"Please. At least not before the wedding."

"Why not?"

"I can't tell you until then."

"Secrets? Still?"

"A lot of secrets. That I can't reveal until we're married."

The unrenamed "Osbourne's House of Game", "Have a good time, babes?"

"Oh, yes. Couldn't have gone better." she sits in the living seat, kicking her feet up, beaming.

"Really? You didn't even call me out for calling you babes."

"I didn't. I'm in that good a mood. Things are looking up. Now, I just need to talk to her Majesty."