

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 98
ROBO-LISA

Lisa stands in the home office, staring at the computer as if it's about to bite her. "Remind me again why I'm doing this, Magic Boy?"

"Second thoughts?"

"Third thoughts. At least."

"Ok. So, we're doing this because in a couple of weeks we're getting married."

"Completely slipped my mind."

"Which means," Peter continues, "that you'll also own..." he stops at the grimace, "you'll also be in charge of Carrie."

"Am I my sister's keeper?"

"And as Carrie's programmable now..."

"Don't remind me."

"...you need to be able to think how she does to make the best use of..."

"You don't have to make her sound like a particularly complicated washing machine!"

"We don't have to do this now."

Lisa takes a deep breath. "No. If we need to do it, we do it now. Before I change my mind."

"Ok. Ready?"

"As I'll ever be." She picks up her phone and takes another deep breath. She presses the app and feels the change begin. She feels static crawling over her skin. Her breathing slows and eventually stops. Her clothes fade into her skin, a silvery sheen passing over her body. The silver tone deepens, her skin taking on an artificial appearance, smooth, sleek, silver skin. Her eyes stop blinking. Her body assuming the stillness of a machine not in use. "This feels...what do I sound like?" her lips don't move, the artificial voice just issuing out from behind her slightly parted lips. She turns, a slight whine of motors whirring beneath her metal frame.

"How do you feel?"

She pauses, "Numb. Physically, it's all muted." She presses a finger into her palm. "Like, I can feel there's pressure there but..."

"And emotionally?"

"Also numb. I'm not feeling much of anything. Which feels strange, but not strange. Because I'm not, I can see how I would react, but that's not how I am reacting."

"Do you want to go ahead with the rest?"

"It is logical that I proceed now. Otherwise, we will have to repeat this procedure."

"Right." He reaches for her neck, finger digging against her cold metal skin until it finds the hatch and opens it. He pushes the slider behind the hatch. Lisa's eyes flash. A seam appears around her neck, deepening until there's a click.

"Did it work?"

Peter twists her head until there's another click. He feels the head loosen and lifts it away, exposing a brass ring around the inside of Lisa's neck and a maze of circuits, wires and cables inside her.

"Seems like it."

"Don't drop me."

"Of course not. Although, I think the floor would come off..."

"I repeat, don't you dare drop me."

Carefully, Peter carries her head, setting it beside the computer.

"There."

"Ok. Now what?" Peter grabs a USB lead and slides it into her neck. "Oh, that feels...nice. You're sure this isn't the sex version?"

"You downloaded it."

"Oh, sure, blame me." He places the connector into his computer. Lisa's eyes flash as the new drive appears. "That's...I can't describe what it is."

"Just concentrate on the screen. Try to move the..." the mouse sweeps across the screen, "Maybe a

little less...”

”It’s not as if this is easy, Magic Boy.”

”Sorry, sorry. When you’ve got the hang of moving, just click on the ‘Lisa-bot’ drive.”

”I do not love that name.”

”I would suggest we rename it but part of our agreement for this was no changes.”

”Blaming me again, I see.”

”It was your choice both times.”

”That’s hardly the point.” the mouse moves over, clicking on a scarily accurate if pixelated version of her face. A set of folders appears on screen. “It is very strange to see my brain arrayed like that.”

”I know. But that’s how Carrie’s is structured.”

”Sort of.”

”Ok, sort of, yes. Just click on that menu at the top and unhide system files.” Ghostly grey directories and files appear on the screen. “Now click on that one.”

”System processes? Why am I clicking there? I thought I needed to understand...”

”Just click on that icon there.”

”Why am I...mana distribution? Isn’t that what...” Peter grabs the mouse, right-clicks and sets visualise. ”Hey! What do you think you’re...”

”Aha!”

”I’ll aha you! You’re up to something.”

”Guilty.” he clicks on part of the visualisation.

”Stop that.” the mouse jerks away from where it was. “If you want to survive putting me back together, talk to me.”

”So, what I said about thinking logically to control Carrie was true but...I had an idea.”

”Uh-huh.”

”Carrie’s mana system is broken and...”

”...and you thought mine isn’t so...”

”...so get a comparison reading and let Dr Black see how the functioning system works so...”

”...so she can use that to fix what’s wrong with Carrie?”

”Exactly.”

”And you could not tell me this beforehand because...?”

”I wasn’t sure it would work. And I didn’t...”

”Yes?”

”I didn’t want to get your hopes up. Even now, it might...”

”You could have told me. I’m a big girl.”

”Sorry.”

There’s an electronic sigh. “Fine.”

”Can I take a copy?”

”A copy?”

”Hopefully it’s a simple matter to just replace Carrie’s faulty code with this, but...”

”Go ahead.” her eyes flash, feeling strange as Peter tries to save that part of her to the drive.

Some time later, a once more human Lisa sits on the sofa, her legs crossed, a steaming mug of tea in her hands. “So, what exactly was that supposed to be for? Apart from people who are way too into AI.”

”There are a couple of tricks. Basically anything where you take your assistant apart can be flavoured with some industrial set dressing. Similarly, if you want to ‘assemble’ your assistant on stage and don’t want to use mannequin parts, robot works pretty well. And there’s the cyborg lady which specifically...”

”Ok, ok. I get it.” she looks at her phone as it beeps, “DLC? For a magic trick? What could...oh!”

”Oh?”

”You’re all perverts.” she replies holding up her phone, “Every single last member of this community are perverts.”

"You're part of this community now, you...oh."

"You see?"

"'Orgasm programme.' Pretty cheap."

"Oh, shut up. I am not going to..."

"Who suggested you should?"

Lisa reddens, "Shut up."

"Someone's telling on themselves."

"I said shut up." she replies, burying her face in a cushion.

"I won't judge you..."

"Shut up!"

"It's quite natural to be..."

"If I download the fucking thing, will you stop badgering me?"

"I'm hardly."

"Fine. I'm doing it now. Leave me alone now, you big bully."

"Ok."

"And I bet you want me to try it out now."

"I haven't said anything!"

"Just play along, will you?!"

"Oh, it's that kind of 'protest'."

"You are so dense sometimes. I bet you're not even considering pretending that you're turning me into your defective robot slave without me having any say in the matter, taking me apart for diagnosis and running that programme until my robot brain burns out." she presses the app on her phone, silver skin flowing across her.