

PETER AND LISA: CHAPTER 100
I THEE WED

The wedding day dawns crisp and bright and far too early to an insistent beeping. Peter fumbles for his phone, knocking the well-used fuckbox onto the floor. “Ello?”

”This is your early morning alarm call. If you’re not already up, you’d better be.”

”Stuart?”

”I’m on my way and if you’re not showered, dressed and only moderately hung-over when I get there, I’ll sic Saz on you.”

”She’s with you?”

”Don’t be silly. She’s getting your better half ready. And has been for an hour, already. She also says Carrie had better arrive soon, so I suggest you deal with that. If you already have, I’ll be impressed.”

”I’ll be ready.”

”Suuure you will.” he hangs up.

Peter gropes for the small pink cube. “Restore.”

Carrie expands out of the cube, still naked. “Hello, Master. Ready for round, what was it, seven?”

Peter sighs in annoyance, “Fucktoy off. Get dressed.”

Carrie blinks, her body shimmers, clothes appearing over her, casual jeans and t-shirt. She yawns and stretches, “Good morning, my dear Owner and future brother-in-law. Thanks for letting me stay the night.”

”No problem. But it’s time to get you ready. Let me phone Saz.” he dials, tapping his foot as he waits for her to pick up.

”Stuart’s been in touch, I take it?”

”Yes, your Majesty. Just now.”

”And you’ll be ready?”

”Of course. It’s only the most important day of my life. Are you alone?”

”Stepped out of the whirlwind. Your future mother-in-law is a hurricane of energy.”

”Like her daughters. Can you receive a visitor where you are?”

”Ah, our lost little lamb. Give me a second...ok, I’m downstairs by the door. Send her over and I’ll ‘open the door for her’.”

”You might want to hold the phone away from your ear.”

”Got it.”

”See you later.”

”Later, Mas...” she dissolves into pixels, flowing into the phone and sending her on her way.

”She’s here. Time for you to get presentable.”

”I’ll...”

”Oh, finally. Did you get lost? Is that Peter?! Give me that. Hey, Magic Boy.”

”Hey.”

”Saz get you up at an ungodly hour, too?”

”That’s Stuart’s job.”

”And, as you’re up, I guess he’s done it. Did you have fun last night?”

”I did. Stuart got the bright idea of having Carrie as the stripper.”

”He what?! Did you know about...of course, you did. Oh, we’ll talk about this.” her voice returns to full volume as she turns back to it, “And were you a good boy?”

”Well, I only promised not to fuck a random stripper. A carefully planned one wasn’t...”

”I promise, I am perfectly capable of killing you on our wedding night.”

”Of course, I didn’t.”

”Good boy. I’d...I’m coming, Mam! I’d better go. See you soon.”

”See you soon. And forever.”

”And forever.”

He closes the call.

At the other end of the line, Lisa turns to her sister, "Really? You really decided to be the stripper? At my fiancé's stag do? Really?"

"Hey, I didn't decide it so much as did what the Keeper told me to."

"Of course. Well, at least he didn't sleep with you."

"Sleep with him? On your wedding day?! Of course I fucking didn't!"

"I know, I know. I'm just....this is my big day. So..." she holds up her hand, her fingers trembling, "just a little stressed. Especially with you doing what you did." she turns towards Sarah, "And don't think I've forgotten your involvement, either."

"I'd be disappointed if you had. But we'd best get back before your mother goes on a warpath."

Lisa takes a deep breath, and climbs the stairs.

"Ach, there you are." she fusses, a little shorter than Lisa, a little wider, her fading red hair piled up on her head in a bouffant crown. She's dressed in a green jacket, white blouse that's been cleaned and ironed to within an inch of its life, long green skirt, gold and pearl necklace, and a collection of rings glittering on her fingers. "Now come here, sit down, both of you, oh, Carrie, your makeup needs touching up and, oh, Carrie, dear, you need a shower! Your hair's filthy! Out spending all your time with your university friends, I warrant. Get going, my girl, we can't have you out like that." she pushes Carrie towards the bathroom.

At the back of the room, Ola smooths out her purple dress, identical ones for each bridesmaid.

"Let's see, something old..." she places a set of silver earrings on the table, "something new..." a pair of shoes to match Lisa's dress, "something borrowed..." a brooch with a red stone set within gold cameo, "and something...oh shit..."

"Language!" Lisa's mother says primly as she bends over her daughter's makeup.

"Sorry, sorry, but where's the something blue?! We were...what were we going to do for that? Lise doesn't wear blue."

Lisa tries to remain still in the centre of the sudden scramble, feeling the makeup brush over her cheeks, applying more makeup than she's ever worn since she was six and hopefully rather better applied. She feels a warming on her finger, the ring pulsing against her skin..

"Is there a problem, dear?"

Lisa's face crinkles.

"Don't frown! I'm trying to keep the lines." her mother scolds.

"I'm a little busy."

"Oh, I can see that." she replies.

Lisa's frown deepens despite her mother's scolding. *"You're here?"*

"Obviously, dear. It's always so calming watching everyone else do all the work. You should enjoy it. Your wedding is probably the last time that's true. Certainly was for me."

"What do you want?"

"I'm trying to help. Something blue being a problem, is it?"

"... Yes."

"Well, dear, I think you'll find, if you just look in the second drawer down, there'll be a nice royal blue bracelet for you. My contribution to the happy day."

"I..."

"Don't talk, dear."

"Give me a second, Mam." she takes a breath, "I think Sarah put the blue in the second drawer."

Sarah looks up but dutifully opens the drawer and lifts out the bangle, a blue centre framed in faux gold. "Ah, yes, I'd quite forgotten." she places it with the others, "Something blue."

Ola stops her franticness, or, at least, dials it down to only regular wedding day levels of panic.

"Right. Now that that drama's over, you must stay still!"

Later, Peter paces around the opulent manor house they've chosen, neither qualifying, or particularly keen, on a full church wedding. "Well, my boy, if you wear a hole in the carpet there, you'll be picking up the tab, what?" Charlie says, fiddling with his clip-on tie, running his hand

through his thinning dirty blond hair. "Don't worry, she isn't the type to do a runner."

"I'm not worried."

"That track in the carpet says different. I didn't persuade Mother to open up the family pad for this shindig to let you damage it. Never hear the end of it, what?"

"I know, Uncle Charlie. Thanks again."

"Think nothing of it. Obviously, we're prohibited from attending. After that business with your father, you know, your branch of the family are the blackest of black sheep."

"And yet you're here?" Mike says, looking comfortable in his suit, while Peter feels his is itching and pinching everywhere it can.

"Oh, yes, well, I suppose I'm a dark grey sheep then, what?. Mumsy's quite used to me sticking my neck out for this sort of thing. Aside from the fact that I'm the celebrant, so it would be tricky for me not to be here, really, wouldn't you say, what? And you did pay the usual price to rent it out for a wedding so she really can't complain. I mean, she has, does and almost certainly will, but it'll just be complaining."

"We did?"

"Well, it was paid for on your behalf by 'interested parties'." he taps the side of his aquiline, nose, "But, mum's the word, you understand."

"Of course." Peter replies, adjusting the bow-tie for what seems like the hundredth time, "Your secret is safe with us, Uncle Charlie."

"Good, good." he looks out the window, "And there's the bride's carriage. Places everyone, what." he walks out, clapping his hands to get attention.

Shortly, the bridal march starts, Lisa walks along the aisle, her face hidden behind the gauzy veil, her white dress leaving her shoulders bare, swirls of lace around her shins, the bouquet clasped tightly in her hands. She feels her father's hand on her arm, glancing around. One half of the hall is crowded, her family, cousins and all in the foldaway seats. The other half is barely half-filled. Standing at the front of the aisle stands Peter, looking uncomfortable in his suit, but his face is lit up as he looks down the aisle.

She stops beside him, flipping up the veil as her father withdraws to the seat by her mother. "You did manage to recover from your night, then."

"I had a strong incentive."

"You're so goofy. Sweet but goofy."

"If I may have your attention, everyone. Before we get to the legal and mandatory parts, the bride and groom have their own vows." he looks from one to the other. "Who wants to go first, what?"

Peter takes a breath, staring down at the index card he's slipped from his pocket.

"Cheater."

"Lisa, I promise to be beside you for the span of a life, full and equal in whatever the future may bring. There shall be no secrets between us and nothing shall divide us. I am yours as you are mine, our fates entwined. I love you."

Charlie turns towards Lisa as she shivers at a sudden chill.

"Peter, I promise to stand at your side for a lifetime, facing the future together. No secrets shall stand between us. You are mine as I am yours, our hearts beating as one. I love you."

"And now we have the declarations." he hands a small card to them.

"I do solemnly declare that I know of no lawful impediment why I, insert name here..."

"No jokes. This is the legal part."

"... why I, Peter Samuel Stafford, may not be joined in matrimony to Lisa Joanne McCagherty.

"I do solemnly declare that I know of no lawful impediment why I, Lisa Joanne McCagherty, may not be joined in matrimony to Peter Samuel Stafford."

"That's the declaration done. Now for the contracting words."

"I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, Peter Samuel Stafford, do take thee, Lisa Joanne McCagherty, to be my lawful wedded wife."

Lisa looks into his eyes, "I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, Lisa Joanne

McCagherty, do take thee, Peter Samuel Stafford, to be my lawful wedded husband.”

“You have said the words and pledged yourself according to law in front of these witnesses. I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride, what.”

Peter leans in, Lisa puts her gloved hands around his head and pulls him in. Their lips meet and those assembled welcome their new phase of life with a resounding cheer. Hand in hand they walk back down the aisle and out into the sunlight.

“Now,” he tries to make himself heard over the noise of chairs scraping, “The photographer is waiting outside. Give him a few moments with the happy couple and then go and join them. Make sure you all look presentable. It’s for the album, what.”

After the photos have been taken, and the bouquet thrown, they head from the countryside to Mister E’s. Tracy clutches the bouquet silently, staring down at her hands. Ola keeps chatting throughout the journey, distracting from the traffic, although the roads flow smoothly as they wind their way through London.

Those who don’t have to wait for conventional transport, arrive first. “Look at that cake! It’s huge!”

“**Because you’re tiny.**” the black cloud sighs. The fairy sticks her tongue out at him, “**Very mature.**”

“Just look at it. it’s three tiers and they’re as big as I am!”

The cloud looks around, “**I don’t see too many toasters at least.**”

“Amazon wish lists are a great thing.” she flits up to the top of the cake, “Look! They’ve got bride and groom toppers!”

“**Of course they...**” he stops, “**...I hear someone coming.**”

“We’d better hide then.” she dives for the cake, sparkling as she sinks into the groom topper. The cloud sighs again and spirals down into the bride.

“**Almonds? Why do I smell...these are marzipan!**”

“*Are they? Who could have guessed?*”

“**You could. And did. Don’t deny it. This is just the sort of thing you’d do.**”

“*Me? Why would I do that?*”

The crowd comes into the room. “Wow!” Ola is almost rendered speechless, “That is a cake.”

“It is.” Sarah replies, “I’m quite pleased with it.”

“You didn’t make it yourself?”

“Oh, God, no. I hope it’s a lot tastier than that. Ok, bride and groom, start posing for some pictures.”

“More pictures?”

“You’ll regret it if you don’t.”

“I’m almost prepared to take that...ok, fine, no need for the puppy eyes.”

They each place their hands on the knife, slowly sliding it into the bottom tier, cameras clicking.

“And now for a special part of the ceremony.”

“Special part? What are you up to?”

“Just a little balancing.” she plucks the bride and groom off the top tier. “If you’re going to be equal, you need a little balance inside you.” She hands the bride to Peter and the groom to Lisa.

“Don’t worry, they’re marzipan. Totally edible.”

“They’re...they look just like us.”

“They should. Now, the groom gets a symbolic bit of the bride inside him and vice versa before your wedding night when...”

“Hey!”

“What?” Sarah replies innocently.

“**And this is exactly what you planned, isn’t it? Getting eaten by your son.**”

“Oh, blow it out your arse.” she replies as Lisa lifts the miniature groom up to her mouth, “*Besides, he’s your son, too.*”