

Poker Faces

by janus

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Phineas Nigellus Black was sympathetic. The young man - possibly the youngest headmaster the school had ever seen - certainly had a challenging staff, with its worthy members openly antagonistic to him, and his 'allies' vicious dullards.

How witty of Severus to have chosen to draw them in with poker in his study! His prizes attracted the Carrow twins. Bids represented the students' disobediences. The prizes represented their punishments.

Phineas Nigellus had irreproachable lineage and he was welcomed as a fourth. But he and Severus prepared all the deceits, signals and distractions of an American river-boat dandy of a century before. The Carrows were completely taken in every time.

Phineas Nigellus risked winking and grimacing when they both looked away, entertaining himself by mimicking their stolid suspicious squints. The young headmaster sat quietly, giving away exactly what he wished, maintaining his tense nervous demeanour and reflecting nothing.

Between them they protected the children, and Phineas Nigellus was able to offer nightly relief to the rigid isolation his successor took upon himself.