

The Great Train Robbery

by *Fairfield*

The weed of crime bears better fruit.

Chapter 1 of 1

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"They're wasting my money. That's what they're doing," declared Lucius, slamming his drink down hard enough that sherry erupted out of the goblet. "They're Money Eaters. That's what they are."

"It's only a little bit of your wealth. You should hear the cockamamie plans the Order of the Bird Brains are debating," said Severus, splashing more of the school's vintage into their cups.

"Plans? At least your group has plans. I've told the Galleon Gobblers a thousand times. Intercept that meddling brat and his cohorts just before or just after their train ride to school," said Lucius.

"The Malfoibles want some of their money back. The Array of Turkeys would like some money," said Severus in an alcoholic insight. "We need a scheme. We need a schemer. What about that wife of yours?"

"What about that student of yours?" countered Lucius. "Wouldn't she like to become more knowing?"

In a flash of brilliance, they decided they should switch identities. Approaching the two witches would be accomplished with fresh perspective and unhampered by the burden of the past. Lucius would become a Severus-clone; Severus would become a Lucius-clone.

"You came back in great spirits last night," Narcissa told the Lucius-clone at breakfast.

He nodded. "Have you ever thought that we've been giving too much support to that riff-raff band and we should try to get some of it back?"

She perked up. "That session with Severus did do you some good. He's cynical, but sometimes a critical eye helps."

"I suggested that you could come up with a good plan," said the Lucius-clone.

"Oh, sweetheart," she said, moving into his lap. "Let me think. Money is most vulnerable when it's in transit. We need to convince them to move it to some remote place on the grounds that it will be safer there."

"That's brilliant. All you need to do is firm things up," said the Lucius-clone.

Narcissa wiggled suggestively. "I'm good at firming things up."

"You wished to see me, Professor," Hermione asked the Severus-clone.

An owl had arrived two days ago requesting a secret meeting. She had told the Weasleys that she wanted to spend a day in the bookstore, and they had not volunteered to accompany her.

"More often than one might think, opposites attract," began the Severus-clone after Hermione had seated herself.

"Yes," said Hermione, leaning closer.

"It is upon those rare occasions that we must act lest the moment be gone and great opportunities missed," he added.

A warm feeling was spreading through her. "I agree, sir."

"I may be alone in my opinion, but I think it a mark of greatness of spirit when an individual can see beyond the surface and join in companionship with those of different temperament," said the Severus-clone, noticing the girl's eyes were bright and her skin was flushed. He continued, "It often happens that such unions occur in an episode of adventure, which implies they require persons of courage and conviction." He paused. "I was hoping you were one of those chosen few."

"Oh, professor," sighed Hermione.

He outlined the plan to which she agreed. He suggested she look at a map that had the location of the strike and the routes of the parties. As he escorted her to the planning room, they spied mutual acquaintances who might not understand the exalted nature of this professor-student alliance. He swept her into an ally and held her close behind a concealment spell. To enhance the effectiveness of the spell, she pressed against him.

Omigod, he thought.

Omigod, she thought.

It was the dress rehearsal, and Narcissa was checking the costumes of the participants.

"Who did you choose?" she asked as the Lucius-clone moseyed through the door in full regalia of hat, bandanna, and chaps.

"Billy the Goat," he announced.

"You mean Billy the Kid," she said.

"That's what I said," he rejoined.

"Like my holsters?" he asked.

"You have two," she observed.

"Sometimes one six-speller just ain't enough ma'am," he said.

Narcissa looked up as a well-shaped package of buckskin and fringe entered.

"Aren't you going as Belle La Starre?" she asked her oldest sister.

"The purpose of a masquerade is to explore hidden aspects of our personality in order to bring out neglected potential that might otherwise remain undeveloped thereby contributing to the integration of our objective and subjective parts which stimulates an advance in our consciousness and enhances our karmic destiny as we traverse the meandering path seeking the golden thread of our existence," said Bellatrix.

As Narcissa was pondering the higher realms, a violet visitor intruded on her vision.

"The rider of the purple sage," said Fenrir to her inquiring look.

"Not El Lobo?"

The purpose of a masquerade is to ... ," began Fenrir.

"Quite," said Narcissa.

A shimmering specter galloped into the room on a broom breathing fire.

"Wait, wait, don't tell me," said Narcissa.

"And who are you?" the specter asked Bellatrix.

"Princess Summer-Kill-Winter-Death," she replied.

"Dang, that's poetic," said Fenrir.

Narcissa felt envy.

Meanwhile, the Severus-clone was preparing himself for the coming fray. He stuck his wand through his belt in the back.

"Moody says you'll fry your ass doing that," remarked Hermione.

The Severus-clone moved the wand to the front of his belt. He thought a bit. He moved it back to the back.

Hermione felt a warm glow for his consideration of their future.

Four hours after the train left the terminal, it was crossing an old bridge when the students noticed a strange formation in the sky.

"It's a bird," said Draco.

"It's a plane," said Neville.

"It's a band of raiding Indians," said Hermione.

"Whoop, whoop, whoop" went Bellatrix. A hex popped the bottle caps off Luna's necklace. Another burst the mimulus plant and sprayed everyone. For sheer orneriness, she shot a bolt through a window that caused Hermione to toss 'Hogwarts, a History' into the air. It landed face down, tearing a page and breaking the spine.

Forgetting her role in sheer rage, Hermione hurled a counter curse. "*Azkaban Hair.*"

The band of raiding Indians began shooting fire-arrows into the roofs of the coaches.

"Are they allowed to do that?" asked Pansy.

Just as things were looking dire, the cowboy posse appeared, and the students rushed to the windows on the other side to watch in shock and awe.

Hermione ran to the last coach that contained the hidden treasure, but the participants were forgetting it was only a mock battle. The coach exploded in a flurry of curses, and gold coins flew into the clear blue sky like a golden shower, but ever-ready Hermione waved her wand and the coins sorted themselves into two equal stacks on each side of the rails. The adults could collect their reward when they were through playing.

Later, things returned to normal – or nearly normal. The masquerade had indeed integrated objective and subjective parts.

At the Manor, Narcissa was preparing a dinner of Champaign, asparagus, and oysters. Planning campaigns had touched her inner being.

At the dinner table, Hermione was beaming at Professor Snape. She knew that more clandestine meetings were essential for the triumph of the good.

At the sorting ceremony, the Hat was having a rough time. Everyone wanted to be Cowboys and Indians, er, Gryffindors and Slytherins.

From an old prompt by MuseAmusant: A drunken wager between frenemies.