

The Witch Is A'Foot

by *Fairfield*

Join a young Albus and Phineas on a chase through London.

Chapter 1 of 1

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"You're drawing attention to us, Albus."

"What? Why?"

"Most people get wet in a rainstorm."

"Are you suggesting I let myself get soaked, Phineas?"

"Why, yes I am, for a good cause of course. You could have bought an umbrella as I did, but you didn't want to waste the money, and no, I am not going to lend you mine."

Albus grumbled all the way to the broly shop, declaring it would be worthless getting one since he couldn't get any wetter while Phineas asserted that getting one after the storm was over made him look more human. They then rehashed their argument about revisiting the train station. Albus thought locomotives would be a marvelous addition to their world and the steam would help him dry faster while Phineas believed they should put all their efforts into finding the enclave of witches said to be hiding in London before the authorities did. The argument shifted to their posing as stage magicians as a cover. It was an easy disguise, but one night, getting carried away by their efforts to please the house, they had performed tricks beyond the range of non-magic magicians.

"I think your last stunt tipped off the more astute, Albus."

"What stunt?"

"The one where you pulled the hat out of the rabbit."

"It was perfectly natural," said Albus. "A magician has a rabbit, and a magician needs his top hat. What was I supposed to pull out of the rabbit, a tea towel?"

"You could use it to dry off," said Phineas.

Phineas reminded Albus of two men in particular in that audience: a hawk-nosed devil and his partner with a limp who looked like a veteran. Someone in the audience had called one of them Sherlock, and they might be looking for the witches too. Albus said Phineas was seeing witch hunters behind every tree. Phineas replied there were damn few trees in London and both those men looked as though they had killed.

"As if you haven't," said Albus.

"Your time will come," said Phineas, "if you keep pitting yourself against those you believe evil."

They tried to decide which part of London to search next. The West end was a better place to hide since the police were less likely to hassle the rich while the East end had a good supply of places to get jellied eel of which they had both become fond.

"That's another thing," said Phineas. "You keep attracting attention to us."

"I do not," said Albus.

"Oh yeah," said Phineas. "What about your calling the waitress over, claiming your eels were still alive, and making them wiggle in their gelatin? I thought her screams were going to bring the rafters down."

"You have no sense of humor," said Albus.

Sense of humor or not, they would fortify themselves with eel before searching the West end. After lunch, however, inspiration struck.

"Wait," said Phineas. "We've been stupid."

"Tell me something I don't know."

"Suppose the witches had the same idea we had, but they were cleverer about it," said Phineas.

"Go on," said Albus.

"They would attach themselves to a magic show, but they wouldn't be the magician, they would be his assistants. They could make his act be financially successful, but they wouldn't be in the spotlight."

"If you're right about everything," said Albus, "then we can put a tracking spell on that hawk-nosed devil and his killer partner and they will lead us to them faster than we could find them in this unknown town."

Two nights later, Albus and Phineas were sitting behind their dangerous-looking duo and watching an incredible performance. A quick spell revealed the three assistants were those they sought, and they hurried backstage after the show.

They had just identified themselves as wizards and convinced the young ladies they were in danger, and they had just bought the magician's silence with the gold coins they had brought to bribe the officials, an act which made them feel virtuous, when they heard a commotion in the theater.

"You're too late!" wailed the girls.

"No, we're not," said Albus and Phineas, grabbing the ladies and running for the back door.

"They're gaining!" wailed the girls.

"Not for long," said Albus, remembering Phineas's slur on his last performance as he hurled his hex:*Tea Towels*.

Hundreds of strips of cloth flew in the faces of the pursuing Bobbies.

"Is that all you can do?" asked Phineas, remembering his friend's over indulgence as he spun his spell:*Jellied Eel*.

The Bobbies were slipping and sliding.

"Why didn't you ask for electric eels?" asked the girls.

Annoyed by criticism from those they had rescued and irritated by the constant poor weather, the two waved their wands one more time:*Rain Storm*.

The two were gratified by the sight of the soaking-wet veteran shaking his fist at them and the hawk-nosed one examining a huge pipe that the deluge had extinguished.

Prompt from MuseAmusant: rain storm, tea towel, jellied eel.