

Hail the Monorail

by

Ms. Tiger to You

“Boss, let us in on the secret. How did Marcel manage to score a sweet deal like this?” Jackie absent-mindedly ran her fingers through her spiky red hair for the tenth time in as many minutes.

“Sweet? Are you kidding, one-shot go, with all those officials giving us the look-over?” Zilvara half-giggled as she squirmed into her costume.

“And more cash than we’ve seen around here so far,” muttered Petra as she glanced at her younger sister.

“Indeed.” The young sandy-haired magician cleared his throat. “We know that Marcel can keep his own counsel. However he managed this neat trick, he certainly put his money where his mouth is.”

“And I know exactly where he puts his mouth.” Samantha smiled and licked her lips very slowly.

“Give it a sodding rest,” spit Jackie.

“Boss,” Zilvara complained.

“Ewww, Samantha,” moaned Petra.

The ensuing nervous silence was broken by Petra. “Boss, did you know that the original name for the monorail was One-Track Mind?”

“Just like Marcel, and he can ride that rail straight to my...”

“Entirely too much information!”

“Boss, make her chill out!”

“Sam!!”

“Jealous, jealous,” Samantha chided. “And chill out? It isn’t as if we’re planning an ice trick in our routine.”

“That we can always change. No? Yes?” As the magician spoke he pulled on his face to reveal the middle-aged Faustus the Great. “And now it is time. Come, come!” He snapped his fingers, and the ensemble faded from sight.

A solitary figure in a black shirt and black jeans silently watched the officials enter the monorail station.

“Hey, is that one of the security guards?”

“Can’t be. We passed security at the turnstile, and the other guards should already be on the train. And

this guy's carrying a bottle."

"A bottle?"

As if in acknowledgment Faustus raised the cobalt-blue bottle and uncorked it. Smoke poured from the bottle, and the officials blinked as the cloud developed a pair of distinctly feminine eyes and winked at them. Within moments a smiling Petra in a cobalt-blue genie costume floated, arms and legs crossed, next to the magician. Faustus reached over and snatched the scarf that bound Petra's long black hair. "And now we divide. Yes?" He pulled the scarf taut and swiftly passed it through his assistant's bare midriff. Petra giggled as her upper half rose nearly a foot above the remainder of her body. Faustus stepped aside to admire his work. "You wave bye-bye." Petra pouted, but wiggled her fingers as her lower half, then her upper half dissolved into smoke and flowed back into the bottle.

"Magic for sendoff entertainment? In this town it's a natural."

A spray of white fireworks exploded overhead as the train glided from the station. The inaugural run of the Las Vegas Monorail had begun.

"He's back again? Heck of a makeup job on somebody's part."

"Or it's his twin. Or his clone."

"Or he used magic to get here before we did."

"Will you give it a rest?"

Faustus stood near a six foot tall aluminum tube. Samantha, wearing a red Starfleet uniform, waited by the magician. "Ensign, enter transporter tube!" A door slid open in the curved surface. Samantha saluted smartly and stepped into the tube, which sealed shut. Faustus gestured; the tube crackled with blue fire. As the tube reopened, out tumbled a pile of brownish balls of fur. "Wrong trick. Is transformer tube, not transporter tube," groaned the magician. He scooped some of the purring creatures into his arms and offered them to his audience. "Tribbles? Tribbles?" The ruby glow of fireworks reflected onto the track as the monorail continued its run.

"No way!"

"Way. I just wish I knew what it was. I want it."

Faustus stood on what appeared to be an oversized oyster shell. As he stepped off the shell it opened to reveal an empty interior. Faustus gestured; the shell closed and immediately reopened. Jackie, in a leotard as green as her eyes, reclined inside. The magician eyed his assistant thoughtfully. "Need more work, yes?" Before she could protest, the shell closed and opened. Jackie had become a mermaid with an emerald-green fishtail and pearl-covered breasts. She glared at Faustus, who grinned and waved the shell closed. The shell began to spin and shrank until it reached a normal size, then opened again. Faustus then

produced a water-filled glass. Grinning even more, he bent over, picked up the indignantly squirming Jackie by the tail, and dropped her into the water. Green fireworks flared as he brought the glass to his lips.

“You don’t think he plans to ...”

“What? You’re kidding. Let me see.”

“He’s gone! How?”

The train glided from the station.

“Come on, we spend how much on this system and he still gets here before we do?”

“Don’t even think of going there...”

Zilvara, dressed in a hooded bodysuit of purple latex, waited on the platform with Faustus. Without warning the magician grasped her head and twisted it around completely. Smooth flesh now faced the monorail. Another twist, and a white, delicate-featured geisha face appeared. Faustus removed the mask, which he suspended in the air above Zilvara’s head. Three more twists produced a fiery demon, a red-nosed clown, and a delicate blue flower, which soon joined the geisha mask in mid-air. Finally the magician gave one full twist to his assistant’s body. Zilvara’s grinning features appeared within the purple latex covering her abdomen.

“That’s enough. Either this train moves, or I get out and push it myself.”

Purple light flared; the monorail run resumed.

“Sweeeet. At least we know the assistants probably got here the normal way.”

“Oh? Right now I’m not willing to bet on anything.”

Petra and Samantha, in identical Victorian costumes of frilly dress and hat, watched as Faustus thumbed through a scrapbook. Petra’s black hair and deep pink dress contrasted sharply with Samantha’s blonde hair and pure white dress. “Ah. Blank page. Perfect, perfect.” The magician stood the partly-opened book on edge on the floor, then gestured. Within seconds the book had become human-sized. Faustus opened the book wider to expose the blank pages, then pointed to his assistants. “Enter, please.” Petra backed herself against the left-hand page, while a beaming Samantha placed herself against the opposite one. Faustus clapped twice, sharply. The scrapbook slammed shut, then reopened. A pressed Petra held a doll-sized Samantha in her arms. The magician slammed the rapidly-shrinking book shut once again, picked it up and held it out toward the train. Pink light reflected off the cover.

“I’d love to thumb through that scrapbook!”

“I wouldn’t.”

The train moved on.

“What now? A copper pipe?”

“Maybe it’s part of the drain system.”

“Wait a minute. If I couldn’t go *there*, you can’t go *here*.”

A copper tube, 8" in diameter and 16" in length, rested on a wooden trestle. Jackie, in a white tiger-stripe leotard and Zilvara, in a matching gold leotard, stood at either end. Faustus, from behind the tube, pointed commandingly. “Enter, please.” The assistants bent at the waist and stretched their arms over their heads. Stepping forward, they inserted their hands and began to wriggle their arms into the tube. They kept wriggling, arms, heads, and torso disappearing inside, until two pairs of legs remained visible. Faustus frowned. “Use strong leg muscles, yes? Push, push!” The legs wriggled into the tube, and two tigers, a white and a gold, immediately scrambled out. Their ears flattened momentarily as orange fireworks were ignited.

“Amazing. This guy must know somebody around here.”

“And I can guess who.” The official raised a glass to his lips, but stopped when the green-eyed white tiger stared at him and licked its mouth. “I think I’ve had enough wine. Er...I’ll skip on the cheese as well.”

The monorail moved toward its final destination.

“What more can this magician do?”

“I don’t know, but we’re about to find out. This is the end of the line. We don’t go any further.”

“I certainly hope not...”

The full ensemble watched the monorail enter the station. Faustus raised one hand and produced what appeared to be a square of gold foil. He unfolded and shaped and reshaped the foil until it became a traditional lion-head mask of green and gold. A small length of green silk trailed from it. Faustus slipped the enormous mask over his head. Petra, Samantha, Jackie and Zilvara lined up behind him and pulled the silk backwards until all were covered. A vigorous lion-dance of celebration was performed. “Hai!” As multi-colored plumes of fireworks exploded, the empty form collapsed to the station floor.

“What did you say this guy’s name was?”

Several of the applauding officials toed the lion-form as they exited the station.

“Cool,” giggled Zilvara’s disembodied voice. “Look at all the goodies in here. Free food!”

The monorail doors hissed shut. The empty train began its return run.

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