

Psssssstttssss. The doors closed on the subway, and the train took off. I sighed, and sat down on a crowded bench to wait, tired after a long day at school. There were people everywhere, some in costume. It was Halloween afternoon. I glanced around the station, looking for the best costume. Over by the track was a lanky guy in a strange get-up: he had a tall hat, a whip, and a Chair, and he wore a sequined red shirt. Hey, great outfit, I thought. A lion tamer!

Then I noticed next to him a huge cage, its bars gleaming in the fluorescent lights. And inside it was...a magnificent lion! His sleek golden fur covered his rippling muscles. His mane framed his face like the flames of the sun, and his bright eyes looked around intelligently, searching for prey. His tail twitched in anticipation of a good meal. Good thing he's behind bars, I thought. The lion paced in his cage nervously, tale swooshing back and forth. He growled a low, deep rumble, like distant thunder. As I watched, his tail knocked against the latch, and the cage door swung open. The lion was loose!

He pounced with lightning speed. Before we knew what was happening, he had run out onto the platform. People were screaming and running in every direction. I hid behind the bench, trembling. Soon, everyone was gone...except the lion, the lion tamer, and me.

“Help me catch him!” the lion tamer screamed.

Who, me? I looked around. I eased up slowly and made a decision. We were going to catch that lion! It had just started up the escalator, claws digging into the rubber and tearing holes in the steps. We dashed right behind him, following as best we could. We were so close I could smell the musty scent of the jungle on him, and could hear his heavy panting as he searched for something to eat. He took a powerful swipe at the garbage can at the top of the escalator, knocking old napkins, plastic bags, and rotting food everywhere. Then he rounded the corner, and headed back down into the subway. Quickly I made a decision. I jumped over the rail, landing in front of the beast.

“Nooooo!” screamed the lion tamer, heading around the top of the escalator. “He will plow right over you!”

I splayed out on the stairs, the rough metal edges scraping my back. And the lion flew right over me, without touching a hair on my head. As he passed over, I grabbed his rough, bristly tail and tried to hang on. He let out a gigantic roar, rattling the window panes above. He took off even faster, with me flying behind, hanging on to his tail for dear life, the lion tamer in hot pursuit.

The lion roared again, and it echoed through the stairwell like a tornado. As he reached the top, I realized we were trapped in the station. After a quick glance around, the lion pounced into the planter in the center of the room as I released his tail. Well, that makes sense, I thought. It looks like a jungle. The lion tamer came panting up behind me. “What’ll we do?” I whispered.

“Hang on,” he replied. As we watched, the lion lay down, and calmly began licking his massive paws. “Good kitty,” cooed the tamer, as he slowly tiptoed towards the lion. “He’s really just a big baby,” explained the lion tamer,

“just a little mischievous,” and he pulled some smelly treat out of his pocket and handed it out to the lion, which gently licked it from his palm. Then he slipped a rope leash around the lion’s neck, winked at me, and headed back down the escalator, the lion happily padding behind him. I just stood gawking, trying to catch my breath. I then headed back down to catch the next train, and settled down in my seat, exhausted.

I startled awake as the train jolted at my stop. I looked around. No lion. No trainer. Just a bunch of average people in their average Halloween costumes, heading to their different destinations.

Questions swirled in my mind. Was I sleeping? Did I doze off? Did that really happen? As I exited the train, I figured it must have been a dream. Too bad, that would have been a great story. I looked down as I stepped over the gap between the train and the platform, thinking maybe I would visit the zoo next week. And I absent-mindedly pulled a few golden strands of fur off the front of my shirt.