

No Horns Allowed

Friday was the best day of the week. Marching band members got to leave the classroom early and practice for the evening festivities.

First, they would line up with their instruments and then begin marching away from the high school and under the first tunnel. If people on the sidewalk saw them coming, they would cheer and clap. This marching band had won many awards. BOMP! BOMP! Clack, clack, clack. The drums kept time while they marched.

Then they made a left turn and snapped their instruments into place as they began to play. Bu-dump-buh-dah. Bu-dump-bu- bump. Chirp, chirp, chirpeee. Chirp.

They finished just as they reached the bottom of a long hill up and then marched straight toward the next tunnel. By the time they returned to the school, they would have completed a big loop and it would be time for the pep rally before the football game.

Just as they got to the top of the hill, the drum major whistled a frantic high pitch they

had never heard before. It sounded like the danger whistles of a policeman when something was on fire!

Everyone looked up just in time to crash into the marcher right in front of them. Some rolled. Some stacked like dominoes. Some were at the bottom, some at the top. Hippos and gazelles were tied in knots, A bear landed upside down with the tuba on his head. Flamingoes were rolled into pretzels with their flutes scattered all over the street.

Basically, no one knew why they had even stopped!

An enormous yellow sign hung over the railroad tracks and down across the under pass. It declared NO HORNS ALLOWED.

This was completely different than what they already knew. For a hundred years, cars had blown a horn in order to come through.

It all started with Billy McBrat. He was the only second-grader in class who could not draw a straight line. Not with a ruler, a yardstick or even a string. It was no surprise that when McBrat grew up and became the City Engineer, the road through the train trestle was zzzzigzag!

The oncoming traffic could not see each other, so McBrat put up a tiny sign that said SOUND HORN.

It was the only way to prevent accidents. A tiny peep from a moped, rrrrrinnngggg from a bike, or the toot of a car horn. Even that did not prevent every accident.

(Illustration shows two cars in a head on fender bender, both drivers exclaiming they were there first!!)

Finally, the mayor sent Billy McBrat a letter that said, “McBrat, Fix this!”

Every place you looked, signs scolded, “McBrat, Fix this!”

There were so many people up in arms and so many signs all over town that it was actually printed on his gravestone. McBrat, Fix this! instead of his name.

By now, the animals were hot, tired and angry. WHO would put up this sign?

WHAT did it mean? And how would there be a football game without a pep rally, a halftime show and the drum cadence to march to the bonfire after the game? No one wanted to give up the marshmallows later that night.

Suddenly, a voice from the pile up shouted, “We can proceed without the horns. Leave the rhinos here.”

Instantly offended, the rhinos glared and wanted to know, “Who said that?”

The drum major tried to calm them and said, “It doesn’t mean rhinos.

It means trombones and tubas.”

Again, offense was taken until another suggestion was made.

“Maybe it means no cattle, buffalo, or unicorns,” someone else offered even though the marching band did not have any of those animals. “Or reindeer,” the voice continued.

Hippo was devastated. “We are going to miss the parade and we are the parade. Can’t we just take the sign down?”

The eagle whispered to the drum major and then flew off. He was leaving to bring back help.

The zebra approached and said I got an idea. “We can climb the small hill by the trestle and at the top, Elephant can use her trunk to lift us over one at a time.”

A single blast shook the earth as Elephant trumpeted her disagreement.

WAAAAAHHHH!

“How about we link arms then like a chain of monkeys and pull each other up over the track?”

This suggestion was met with a little more cooperative tone to it.

Giraffe, being the drum major, had been thinking quietly for some time.

“Why don’t I look over the trestle to see what is on the other side?”

Cheers of agreement went up in the air and giraffe leaned her body forward

stretching her neck across the railroad track. Sadly, the other side had an identical sign.

NO HORNS ALLOWED

It absolutely made no sense for this trestle to be closed with such a hateful sign hanging on it. She refused to go with half a band, leaving the rest behind because they were either a horned beast, or carried a brass instrument. The sign wasn't even clear in its demand. It made no sense.

NO HORNS ALLOWED?

If she could get everyone in line again, giraffe thought, maybe I can make them go back the same way that they got here.

Three long piercing blasts on her whistle was followed by three short tweets. Every bandmember knew that meant line up. The scattered bowling pins and dominoes were back on their feet at attention. TWEEEE-TWEEEE-TWEEEE tweet tweet tweet

A moment later, one short tweet was followed by "About face!"

Each bandmember twirled around and giraffe marched them back down the hill to the school. They were just in time for the pep rally and climbed into the stands while the drums kept the rhythm. Not only ecstatic to be rescued, it was the first time the drums got to lead the band onto the field. And no one was left behind.