

Horace

By Mike Marlow (@MikeyGeek)

My Aunt Sandy used to keep a brick in her purse. By itself this is not unusual, but the brick's name was Horace, and she was madly in love with it. Him. Whatever.

Now, you have to understand that Sandy was that aunt that everyone has – you know, a little left of center. The one who made her fortune by inventing something that everyone uses and no one knows why. In Sandy's case, she invented beer-flavored lollipops. Well, they were around for a while before she came along, but she's the one who perfected the recipe. She's the reason you can get the exactly perfect amount of wasted on them. That special kind of drunk where you can't remember a damn thing from the night before, but without the headache that feels like your head had been used as an artillery shell all night long. But I digress.

So now you're probably thinking, hmm, she's one of those. DTs and all that. Elephants wearing tutus and dancing ballet in the streets. But it's not like that at all. Okay, maybe there was an elephant, but it was definitely Sandy wearing the tutu. Let me explain.

She had gone to Paris, mainly because all newly wealthy people end up there at some point. I guess she decided to get it out of the way early on, which was how she thought about these things. Anyway, she's sitting at one of those stereotypical cafes, drinking wine and being American at the waiter. You know, just having a good time. After a while she pays her bill and walks down the street to catch the bus. It's one of those new busses where the driver has to blow into the tube every ten miles to prove that he hasn't been stopping off at those same stereotypical cafes. So Sandy gets on the bus.

Being newly wealthy and unsure of how to amuse herself, she has concocted a plan to head over to the Louvre and run through the museum wearing nothing but a tutu, mainly just to see if she can get arrested in Paris. So as the bus nears the Louvre stop, she changes into said getup in the back row of seats. The bus stops, she disembarks, and that's when she sees the elephant.

An elephant on the loose in the Louvre might not seem all that strange, but this guy was hanging around the glass pyramid thing outside, and he was wearing a beret. She never mentioned what color the beret was, at least not to me. The other odd thing was that he was holding a brick and appeared to be having some kind of argument with it. This

distracted Sandy, so instead of taking off running toward the priceless art, she walks calmly over to the elephant and introduces herself.

The elephant, whose name was Laurence, was beginning to get visibly annoyed over the thought that the fellow they were waiting to meet was most certainly not coming. He was already an hour and a half late, Laurence added, and it was generally unwise to trust wizards of his caliber entirely. Horace, the aforementioned brick, however, was much harder to read in an emotional sense, and seemed to believe in the absent magician. He'll be here, Horace exclaimed, and we just need to have a little patience. Once Sandy realized how upset Laurence was getting, she tried to change the subject, asking about the nature of magic and how it was that Laurence came by his lovely headwear. And so the conversation meandered.

Though it apparently didn't bother Laurence and Horace in any way, Sandy's attire (or lack thereof) did eventually become a subject of note among some of the other patrons of the museum. As Sandy was a fairly attractive woman, there seemed to be very little rush to remedy the situation, though. There was even one family who, when asked later, admitted to thinking at the time that the conversation was just a piece of performance art sponsored by the Louvre.

But after a time a cop did finally come over and ask "what's all this then?" or the French equivalent. Thinking quickly, Sandy jumped in and asked him if he'd seen anyone matching the wizard's description in the area recently. My friends have been waiting for him, she said, and he may have simply missed them or may have been waiting in a different corner of the museum. At this point Laurence became visibly nervous, and as Sandy and the cop discussed the appearance of the mage, the elephant passed the brick off to Sandy and backed quietly away, then turned and made for the street, where he tried to hail a taxi. Tried in vain, that is, because oddly enough there didn't seem to be a taxi in the area willing to take on a bereted pachyderm as a fare, no matter the distance. This forced Laurence to make his escape on foot.

This particular gendarme was not the type to be distracted for long, and quickly got back to the fact that Sandy wore noticeably less clothing than was normally acceptable, even in the Parisian arts district. Sandy looked down and seemed genuinely startled at her nudity (or so she hoped). She accepted the officer's kind offer of the loan of his trenchcoat until clothing could be obtained. Conveniently, the Louvre's gift shop was able to provide.

And that's the story of how Aunt Sandy met Horace, the love of her life and a rock solid fellow, one might say. They never did find the wizard, and if she ever met Laurence again, she never told me of it.

