

Old Herb and His Flappy Hat

Old Herb had always liked things quiet. He always kept far away from bustling streets and noisy playgrounds. He went grocery shopping in the middle of the day when most people were at work and had never ever cut the grass on his front lawn. Old Herb was a retired man and lived off the money he had made earlier in life. He spent most of his time in his cozy house where the world was simple and quiet. His days were spent just like that until the day Herbs money got low and he was forced to go back to work.



Herb looked and looked and looked for a job. He wanted to find a quiet, peaceful job like a librarian or a computer man but all positions were full. He finally found a help wanted sign at the town train station. He knocked on the ticket booth window. A skinny short man with hat and a cane opened a door at the side.

"Ah you wanna job as the ticket puncher do ya?" the man asked him. Herb nodded.

"Well get in here! Yellow ticket means passenger, blue means cargo..." Herb smiled, he had found a job at last.



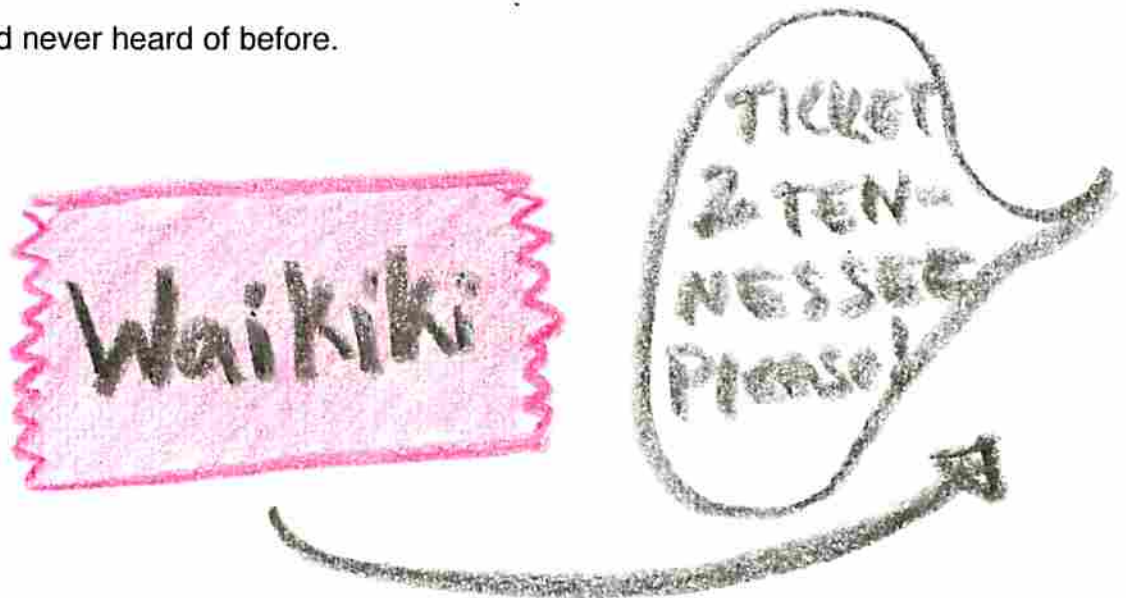
Everyday Herb went to the train station and punched peoples tickets. He met lots of people, learned new things and was happy for the most part, but there was one thing Herb just couldn't stand. The noise. The passengers were always talking the conductors were always yelling, and worst of all was the trains. The trains would not stop CHOOCHOOing! For days Herbs tried to ignore the noise. He brought in headphones, ear plugs, ear muffs anything he could think of to stop the noise! But no matter what he tried the sound of the passengers talking, the conductors yelling and the train CHOOCHOOing rang in his ears day in and day out.



After work one day Old Herb was passing by a clothing shop when he saw in the window a winter hat with big flaps for covering up ears. He quickly ran inside the shop and tried it on. When Herb put that hat on the world was quiet and to Herb that silence was the greatest sound he'd ever heard. He bought the hat and wore it home practically skipping with excitement.



Herb wore his hat to work the next day and the hat turned the noise into a soft muffle, just like he thought it would. When his first customer came over to buy a ticket he said, "I'd like a ticket to Tennessee." But since Herb had his hat on, instead he gave him a ticket to Waikiki. The next customer came she asked for a ticket to Montana but somehow ended up in Louisiana. Herb gave a family from LA tickets to Bombay, he gave a business man tickets to Albakerky when he had a meeting in New Jersey and he gave a newly wed couple honeymoon tickets to Saratoga instead of Calistoga! The train station was in chaos. Everybody was getting on the wrong trains and ending up in crazy places they had never heard of before.



Later that day the conductor asked Herb to put an entire high class circus on a train going toward the east, but Herb heard west and put them on the train going the

wrong way! When the circus manager called the conductor to complain the conductor knew there was only one person to blame.

"Herb! You fool! You've put everybody on the wrong trains!"

"What? It doesn't seem like it's going to rain," said Herb looking up at the sunny sky.

"Not rain! Train!"

"You're going to Spain?"

The conductor's face was red with fury as he lifted up Herb's earflap and screamed,

"TRAIN!!! EVERYONE IS ON THE WRONG TRAIN!!! AND YOU'RE FIRED!"

Herb tried to explain that it wasn't his fault and that his hat was the reason for all his mistakes but the conductor wouldn't budge. Herb sadly gathered up all his belongings and with one final look at his hat, tossed it in the trash-can. As he was leaving the station a little boy ran up to him and said, "Did you hear the news? Did you hear?"

"Hear what?" asked Herb.

"The train going toward the east drove off the track but no one was on it! Luckily the circus accidentally had tickets towards the west so everyone is okay! It's a miracle!"



The conductor had overheard the conversation between the little boy and Herb so he went up to Herb to give him an apology.

"Even though you've mad a lot of mistakes at this job and it may not be the right job for you, your mistakes saved a lot of lives. Your a hero Herb, you and your flappy hat," he said picking Herb's hat out of the trash and placing it back on Herb's bald head.

Everyone in the station cheered for Herb as loudly as they could, but even still Herb could barely hear it through the flaps of his hat, which was just the way Herb liked it.

