**Panties on Parade**

by ToddCheese

Harriet checked her watch. Quarter to nine. She had just enough time to wash her uniform and still make it to the town square in time for the big parade.

Of course, it would have been better if she hadn't spilled her morning coffee all over the front of it in the first place, but that couldn't be helped now. She loaded the white spangled vest with the yellow stripe down the side, followed by the matching short-shorts, into the washing machine in the shared laundry room of her apartment complex. Better set these on delicate, she decided.

She was out of soap, but that was okay, she'd just borrow some like she always did. A quick look around turned up an open container on a shelf in the corner. When she lifted the lid, she found an ominous sign taped to the inside:

"ATTENTION -- I am tired of the other tenants using MY laundry soap all the time. You know who you are. DO NOT take any of this, or you will be sorry! You have been warned."

Yeah right, thought Harriet. This had all the markings of the crazy old lady across the hall. She was always giving Harriet crap about every little thing. The TV was too loud. The stereo was too loud. Harriet's guests were too loud. Now she was whining about laundry soap.

It wasn't even that much, and besides, if the old hag would just keep it in her own room she wouldn't have this problem. But for some reason she insisted on leaving it down here where anyone in the building could get to it. Besides, this was an emergency. Harriet had to march in just over an hour, and she needed to get rid of that coffee stain.

"You will be sorry," she recited to herself mockingly. Oooooh, scary.

Harriet dipped the plastic cup into the coarse white powder. Just a half-scoop, the witch would hardly miss it.

Fifteen minutes later the uniform was sparkly-clean. Another forty-five and it was dry, too.

Back in her apartment Harriet pulled on the short-shorts, zipped up the vest, and laced up her knee-high white marching boots. Her yellow and white cap went on top of her short, slightly spikey blonde hair. She adjusted her glasses and looked at herself in the mirror. She'd put on a little tummy weight lately, but it was nothing a few trips to the gym wouldn't cure. And the marching today would be good exercise.

Harriet pulled on her white gloves, picked up her golden twirling baton, and hurried off.

"You're late," chided one of the bass drummers as she scurried to the front of the band assembled at the edge of the town square.

"No, I'm right on time," Harriet shot back. The guy was an idiot.

The float immediately in front of them began trundling out into the street. There was no time for further argument.

Harriet faced the band and blew a loud burst on the whistle she wore around her neck. The musicians stood at attention, and she whistled a brisk ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR, setting the tempo. Stomping one foot after the other in a precise rhythm, she turned, lifted her baton, and began the march out.

The curbs were jammed with people lining both sides of the street to watch the parade. Harriet held her baton aloft, waving it from side to side to direct the band, a big smile on her face. Every now and then she'd execute a flourish, turning completely around in a circle while twirling the baton rapidly, or throwing the spinning golden rod up into the air and catching it with ease. Those were always a crowd-pleaser.

And so it went, with Harriet marching backwards as the band played, waving her baton like she was conducting them, then facing forward again, leading the slow procession down the parade route. The sky was clear, and the sun reflected off the bright yellow stripes that formed the side seams of her uniform, and off the shiny golden baton. It was hot too, and Harriet used her free gloved hand to wipe a bead of sweat away from her brow.

It was then that she first became aware of the discomfort in the rest of her body. It had crept up on her very gradually, but her short-shorts had begun to feel more and more constrictive, and it was getting harder to breathe under this vest. It was very strange. Sure, she knew she'd put on a little weight, but her clothes had definitely not felt this snug before!

Just knuckle down and ignore it, she told herself. The parade will be over before you know it. Only a few more blocks to go.

But as the band marched on, Harriet's short-shorts started to pinch her painfully. Around her waist they were growing uncomfortably tight, and her crotch was beginning to feel chafed as well.

She tossed the baton into the air again, but the awkward constriction of her vest threw off her aim. The baton bounced on the ground before she could grab it. A few people in the crowd laughed, as did one of the bass drummers, the guy who'd accused her of being late. It was a little embarrassing, but at least the drummers were keeping the beat for the rest of the band, which gave Harriet a chance to retrieve the fallen baton.

But as she bent over, the fabric of her shorts strained ever more dangerously. Just as she reached out her hand, she heard, as well as felt, an unmistakable RRRRRRIP! immediately behind her. A loud burst of laughter from the bass drummer quickly followed. Harriet abruptly stood up with the baton, her mouth frozen open in a silent "Ohhh!"

The crowd didn't seem to have noticed anything yet, but a few of the other musicians directly behind her certainly had. Nervously, Harriet swung one hand around to her rear, and glanced from side to side. Some people in the crowd were looking at each other with puzzled expressions, trying to figure out what the band found so funny.

A loud honking blared out behind her. She was holding up the parade, and the driver of the float following the band was getting impatient. Harriet decided she'd better get things moving again. Stepping her feet, LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT, she blew out another sharp ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR on the whistle, and continued leading the procession forward, waving the baton in time with the drums. Her other arm she kept carefully over her backside, covering up the tear in her shorts.

They were still too tight, and her predicament was getting worse. Even over the banging of drums, the crash of cymbals and the blare of horns, Harriet distinctly felt a stitch pop with every step she took. LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT, RIP-RIP-RIP-RIP! Once she managed to get herself back into the rhythm of the march, she blindly used her free hand to inspect the damage.

It was even worse than she'd feared. The rip started about a half-inch below the waist, and ran down the entire length of her ass-crack. Her fingers groped the loose, wispy threads that now dangled where the seam had burst, leaving a gaping hole in the garment through which she could feel the soft cotton of her exposed panties.

"Ooh, yeah... Finger it, Harriet!" taunted the obnoxious drummer.

She spun around angrily to glare at him, and instantly regretted it. The constrictive shorts made backwards marching difficult. She stumbled a bit, and had to throw out both arms to stay balanced and keep from falling down. As this happened, all the parade watchers up ahead got an unobstructed view of the huge split in her shorts. The ensuing laughter was unmistakably directed at her.

Harriet freaked as she suddenly remembered what was underneath her uniform: Purple cotton panties with a pattern of pink polka-dots! They were her favorite pair of undies, and whenever she put them on she'd always think how simultaneously silly and sexy they made her look. But she'd never imagined anyone else would ever see them, certainly not the entire town! This was SOOOOOO embarrassing!

Quickly she faced forward again and did her best to block the situation from her mind, resolving to finish this with no further mishaps. Focus on the beat, she told herself. LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT... Just three more blocks to go. She hoped everyone would think her reddened face was simply from exertion, but deep down she knew they knew better. Along both sides of the street, people turned to each other, saying something and then pointing a finger right at Harriet! The news of her split pants was travelling down the line of spectators faster than the parade itself! People further down the block turned their eyes on the band in eager anticipation.

But Harriet had bigger problems to contend with. The strain of the wraparound vest squeezing her torso was now becoming unbearable. It felt like a sleeveless straightjacket, if such a thing were possible, crushing her chest and making it almost painful to breathe. It was starting to show deep cleavage, and the top of her powder blue push-up bra threatened to peek out. The zipper down the front creaked ominously.

She tried to keep her breathing as shallow as possible, but that was impossible so long as she was still marching. Then, suddenly, she felt a tiny ping, and a fresh breeze blew across the bare skin of her stomach as the metal teeth holding her zipper together were pulled apart. Before she could even react, the entire vest popped right off her body and fell to the ground!

Harriet's powder blue strapless bra was on full display to the entire crowd, and her little belly stuck out over the hem of her short-shorts. Hastily she slapped her baton arm across her breasts to hide her bra from view. People of all ages on both sides of the street pointed and whistled, and the float riders in front of her had noticed the commotion and were hooting at her as well! Some of the crowd looked around, confused, wondering why this was happening. Could it all be an intentional part of the show? Judging by Harriet's reaction, certainly not, but everyone was enjoying it regardless.

In all the confusion the band had advanced, and her vest was now somewhere behind her. Harriet turned and knelt to pick it up with one hand, the other still shielding the rip in her shorts. That meant she had to let everyone in the band see her bra, but this was an emergency! She found the vest a few steps away, but there was a foot pinning it to the ground. Harriet looked up and saw the obnoxious bass drummer grinning down at her.

"Got a problem, Harriet?" he laughed. The other musicians did too.

"Move your foot!" Harriet ordered, whacking it a little with her baton.

"Make me," he answered.

Harriet pulled and tugged, finally giving up and using both hands, letting her panties show. Bracing her feet against the pavement, she strained with all her might as the chuckling drummer shifted his full weight to the leg standing on her vest.

And then it happened. Harriet heard another heartstopping RRRRRRIP! as the last half-inch of the rear seam on her shorts burst apart! The drummer lifted his foot at the exact same time, and Harriet stumbled backwards, tripping over the tattered remains of her shorts as they slid all the way down her bare legs to her ankles. She toppled over onto the asphalt and landed sprawled in the middle of the street on her back, in just her boots, gloves, bra and panties, with people in all directions looking and laughing at her!

Something started raining down on her, hitting the pavement all around. Small, marble-sized objects. One bounced against her naked flesh and came to rest right in her belly button. She saw that it was an individually wrapped piece of candy, and realized the people in the float were tossing handfuls of it down at her! This was so unbelievably mortifying! And there was no escape. The police had cordoned off all the side streets and alley entrances, and the sidewalks were jammed with people. She'd have to push her way through them, barely dressed!

Scrambling on her hands and knees, Harriet crawled over between the two big bass drums, the only place that offered anything resembling cover... although it still didn't hide her much. She kicked her torn shorts off, they were useless now anyway. Yanking the hat off her head, she held it over her polka-dot panty-clad ass, with her other hand still holding the baton, down her front as best as possible.

"Hey, your uniform doesn't match!" taunted the asshole drummer, making fun of Harriet's mismatched underwear.

She stayed crouched where she was, trying to think of what to do next. The band wasn't going anywhere, she was no longer in control of them. And she was holding up the parade again! The driver in the float behind was leaning on his horn.

"Go!" she shouted at the drummer, red-faced.

"You're supposed to lead us," was his amused reply.

Her heart was pounding, and her face felt like it was throbbing from the searing blush. Harriet refused to move dressed -- or rather, undressed -- like this! So finally the drummer rolled his eyes and started pounding a beat: LEFT... LEFT... LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT... He waved his arm forward and took the band's reins, with Harriet scurrying along between the two big drums, trying her best to keep up and keep covered.

LEFT... LEFT... LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT...

As they marched, the drummer began chanting loudly:

"Har-ri-et likes mar-ching lots,
Show-ing off her pol-ka-dots!"

"Shut UP!" she snarled at him.

But he only answered by reciting a second verse:

"Har-ri-et can't help us play,
'Cause her clothes all ripped a-way!"

At one point they tried to actually make some music, but the first two rows of horns blatted noisily as their owners struggled to push air through the instruments without laughing. It came out sounding absolutely awful. Some people in the crowd actually covered their ears.

It looked like the street up ahead was getting narrower, but Harriet soon realized that people were stepping out from the curb, clamoring for a glimpse of the spikey-haired drum majorette in just her undies. They were coming to the end of the parade route, and the crowd should have been thinning out at this point, but a lot of people were following the band down the sidewalk to keep Harriet in their sights. Many held cameras, video recorders, cell phones at arm's length. Even a television crew with the big shoulder cam rig was getting in on the action! Harriet wailed inwardly as she realized her embarrassing polka-dot underpants would soon be the highlight of the 7 o'clock news, and probably plastered all over the Internet as well!

Poor Harriet had never been so humiliated before in her entire life! How had all of this happened to her uniform? And WHY?!

And then, at the very end of the very last block, Harriet saw a familiar face. It was the crochety old woman from her apartment building. The one whose laundry detergent Harriet kept swiping.

The march finished and the band dispersed, leaving her with absolutely no cover. Some of them lingered with the crowd and continued to laugh at her predicament. Then, the stupid bass drummer went over to the elderly woman.

"Hi, grandma!" he said.

They exchanged a hug. Harriet found it nauseating.

"So how have you been, grandma? Are people still stealing your laundry soap? Did you try my idea, mixing in that stuff? Did it work?"

The old bat looked past her grandson, squarely at Harriet. Harriet, standing like a deer in headlights, in the middle of the street in only her underwear. Harriet, trying uselessly to cover up with half the town staring at her. Harriet, her mouth a gaping "O" of horrified disbelief.

"You know, dear? I do believe it did!"

THE END

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