

Musical Instrument

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Horace needed to play an instrument, or at least that was what mom said. It was supposed to make him well-rounded and interesting or something, but he thought he could better be well-rounded by eating cookies. Parents said odd things sometimes.

Anyway, he was being dragged kicking and screaming to the music store, so he figured he ought to at least look around. His mother had promised him he could try to choose an instrument of his own to play, so long as they both agreed.

The store was bright and large, with some old-fashioned sounding music playing, at least at the entryway. Back along the sides of the store, he could see people testing out pianos and guitars. Okay, so maybe this wasn't so bad. Grinning at his mother, he immediately gravitated toward the drums. They were loud and would irritate mother for having suggested he learn music. He would make her regret her desires, all with the start of one great drum solo.

Smiling an evil smile, he sat down, grabbed a pair of drumsticks, and proceeded to make some noise. Strangely, it was harder than it looked in music videos. He had no rhythm, and it was very hard to get all the sounds going at once by using both of the foot pedals and both hands. He put the drumsticks down, sad and dissatisfied with the effort it took to produce such mediocre results.

Next, he went to the pianos, because mom thought it was a good idea. He tapped a few ivories and decided it was dull. The electric keyboards were cool, if only because they seemed to have a thousand buttons. One even had silly sound effects, like animal noises. Still, it wasn't for him.

Then they rushed past the flutes and brass instruments. He didn't like the sounds of them or the looks. No way was he going to get beat up for being a band geek. Violins were too girly, but an electric guitar – that was the ticket, right? He threw the strap over his shoulder, grabbed a practice pick, let the guitar settle naturally into his hands. Triumphant, he raised the pick, let it fall, and then shuddered and the awful twanging noises it produced as he clearly struck the chords incorrectly. He was awful.

Sighing, mother led him back to the final section, since flutes and other cute, unmanly instruments were out. An older gentleman sat on a stool, running a long bow across the strings of a cello. The melody was haunting, and the sounds were deep and rich. Instantly, Horace felt something he hadn't expected: the desire to play and learn.

The man showed him how to place his hands on the instrument and bow, and within moments a single clean note resounded from the deep cavity of the burnished woodwind. It was a rewarding feel, and he fell in love. "Mom, this is it." He announced.

"I can live with that." Mom declared, pleased as pie.

Horace hardly heard a word she said for the next hour. While she paid and got accessories and lined up lessons, he listened to the old guy play, and even had a chance to tease a few more notes out of the instrument himself. It was love at first listen.



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What is Horace's mother insisting he do?
 - A. clean his room
 - B. learn an instrument
 - C. get some manners
 - D. wear a suit and tie on Sunday
2. What instrument does Horace try to play first?
 - A. drums
 - B. guitar
 - C. piano
 - D. cello
3. Why does Horace want to try drums?
 - A. He thinks they're cool.
 - B. They're easy to play.
 - C. He wants to play a loud instrument to bother his parents.
 - D. They're really expensive.
4. Which of the following instruments does Horace NOT try to play?
 - A. piano
 - B. flute
 - C. electric guitar
 - D. cello
5. What instrument did Horace finally decide on?
 - A. drums
 - B. guitar
 - C. piano
 - D. cello

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