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# Stressed Circus Elephant Makes Mad Dash to Ukrainian Border

By Anna Dolgov

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A circus elephant being trucked from Hungary to Belarus has escaped and fled into Ukraine, in what the driver said was an attempt to avoid the stressful ride along potholed roads, a Belarussian transportation and logistics portal reported Thursday.

Marquis, the 15-year-old African elephant, was loaded into a truck in Hungary on Tuesday in preparation for a trip to the Belarussian capital of Minsk, a route that passes through Ukraine, Transportal.by reported.

Animal handlers in Hungary warned the driver, identified by his first name Andrei, that the journey by truck would be the first in the elephant's life and might prove stressful, the report said. Road conditions did not help, Andrei said.

“Roads on Ukrainian territory are terrible, with constant bumps and potholes, so I had to take particular care driving,” Andrei was quoted as saying. “Nerves were already on edge. This was my first time driving an elephant, and I had no specific instructions — when to feed, how

much to give it to drink, and all that."

After a long bumpy stretch of road, the animal started making "a particular noise" from inside the cargo container, "giving the impression that the elephant was trying to get out of the container," Andrei said, Transportal reported. "It looked like its patience was also running out," he was quoted as saying.

When the driver stopped near a border checkpoint to give his truck a final once-over before crossing, the elephant knocked down a container gate and made a run for it, the report said.

Andrei drove to a police station to report a missing elephant — but instead was asked to take a Breathalyzer test and, after demonstrating sobriety, was invited to write a report that would be forwarded to "appropriate authorities," Transportal reported.

Next, Andrei tried the border checkpoint for help in locating the animal, he said. After listening to the driver's lengthy narrative, border guards asked Andrei to write another report, he was quoted as saying.

"This bureaucracy was simply killing me," the driver was quoted as saying. "I was trying to explain that there was an elephant wandering around the forest. A young elephant that can wreak terrible havoc."

"I was asking for help, but in response I was getting either silence, or smiles," he said, Transportal reported.

A border guard duty officer told Transportal his checkpoint had received the driver's report.

"Measures have been taken to locate the animal, and we can vouch that the elephant has not crossed the Ukrainian border," the duty officer was quoted as saying.

A spokesperson for Belarussian shipper Yanstrong, which had been transporting the elephant, said this was the first runaway case in the company's many years of operation, Transportal reported.

"We were recently transporting animals for a Ukrainian circus, and everything went smoothly, and now we have a situation like this," the spokesperson was quoted as saying, adding that the company had been in touch with the circus in Hungary and with the Ukrainian border guard service "to figure out what to do."

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