

Isabelefant, a Fourth Grade Friend

Isabelefant is an elephant. But not just ANY elephant — she's a fourth grade elephant. Like any other fourth grader Isabelefant has some special talents. You may know some fourth graders yourself. You may be able to think of their special talents. For instance: Maybe you know a fourth grader who is good at science or a fourth grader who can run fast. Or maybe you know a fourth grader who is an excellent mathematician or can tell funny jokes. Well, Isabelefant is beginning fourth grade today and she is good at reading and vocabulary. In fact it is her goal to one day know all of the words in Duckster's Words are Knowledge Unabridged Jigundo Thesaurus. It is her favorite book and she carries it everywhere just in case the situation arises that she may be able to learn and use a large, fancy word.

Isabelefant was so ready for the first day. She had peanut butter for lunch, of course she was going to bring her unabridged thesaurus, and she was wearing her lucky pink dress. Peanut butter was her favorite sandwich. She was sure to impress the teacher with large and fancy words from her thesaurus. Her lucky pink dress was the very same one she was wearing when she won the Vocabulary Bee in third grade in her old school.

Today was not only Isabelefant's first day of fourth grade, but it was her first day at Barkwood Elementary School. After third grade Isabelefant's family moved to a different town to be closer to her Grannyfant. Isabelefant was nervous, but with her thesaurus and lucky dress she felt confident.

At last the school bus arrived in front of Isabelefant's house. She took a last look at herself in the full length mirror. Yes, she looked just right for the first day of fourth grade. Except, well, except for the fact that she was so small. She wasn't just small for an elephant, but small for a fourth grader. At her old school there were even some kindergarten elephants who were larger than she. But maybe this year would be different. Her parents told her that at the new school there were all different species of students. There would not be row after row of elephants, but all sorts of animals. Surely some squirrels or lemurs would be smaller than she, right?

The school bus sounded its horn and Isabelefant grabbed her thesaurus in both hands. She was unable to carry her lunch sack because of the overwhelming size of the thesaurus, but it was worth it. Certainly, she felt, it was much more important to impress the teacher on the first day than to eat.

As Isabelefant struggled with her thesaurus to board the bus she quickly noticed that there were no available seats. The other animals seemed to have already been seated with friends they had known from previous years in school. Friends. Yes, friends would be a challenge for Isabelefant. In her old school she had spent all of her recess time reading her thesaurus and forgot to make friends. Her old bus wasn't so crowded and she was able to sit alone on her way to school and read quietly.

Now she found herself staring down the aisle of a crowded bus lined with animals with whom she had never before attended school. Some of the species she had never even seen in real life, but had only read about in books.

"Find a seat, mouse," The bus driver hissed.

"I'm not a mouse," said Isabelefant politely. "Quite contrarily actually, I'm an elephant."

"Yeah, and I'm a tiger. Just find a seat for NOW and play pretend LATER," retorted the bus driver.

Isabelefant felt slightly insulted, but not so much so that she let it get her down. This was the first day after all and there were sure to be some mix-ups.

She made her way down the aisle. The rest of the creatures continued talking and joking amongst themselves. She passed a panda and a desert fox sitting together and couldn't help but stare. She had only ever seen pandas on television. She passed a hamster sitting with a guinea pig and to her horror, they were larger than she. She knew she was small, especially for an elephant. She even got used to being the smallest elephant in her old school. But it never bothered her too much since she was always waiting for this growth spurt her Grannyfant talked about. Now, at this moment, she realized that she, Isabelefant,

was going to be the smallest of all the animals at the new school. She felt quite intimidated. She also felt pressure to find a seat quickly or else the bus driver might speak harshly to her again.

"Psst. New kid. Would you like to share a seat with me?" a deep voice asked.

Isabelefant peered behind the last row of seats to see a large polar bear in a seat of his very own, a wheelchair. The bear and the seat seemed to be one animal. The bear's thin legs were held in place by metal bars. His arms were resting in his lap and a padded bar with buttons on it extended from the back of the chair to just under his chin. The bear had a ball point pen in his mouth that he kept tucked near the inside of his cheek when he spoke.

"I asked if you'd like to share my seat," repeated the bear .

"Well I don't mean to be so hesitant in responding, but I don't believe there's room for me," Isabelefant replied.

"Sure there is. I think you'd fit on the arm rest, " offered the bear. He used the pen in his mouth to point to the padded arm rest.

"I accept your gracious offer," said Isabelefant. "If you're sure you won't be needing it yourself."

"No, I don't use the armrest," answered the bear. "I don't move my arms or my legs. I can't."

Isabelefant stood on her thesaurus and reached as high as she could onto the wheel of the chair. She pulled herself to the top of the wheel and onto the arm rest.

" Fantastically copious space!" said Isabelefant.

"What does that mean?" asked the bear.

"Lots of room. I'm very comfortable." answered Isabelefant.

The bear smiled at her and she smiled back. Isabelefant decided to do something she had never done before; make a friend.