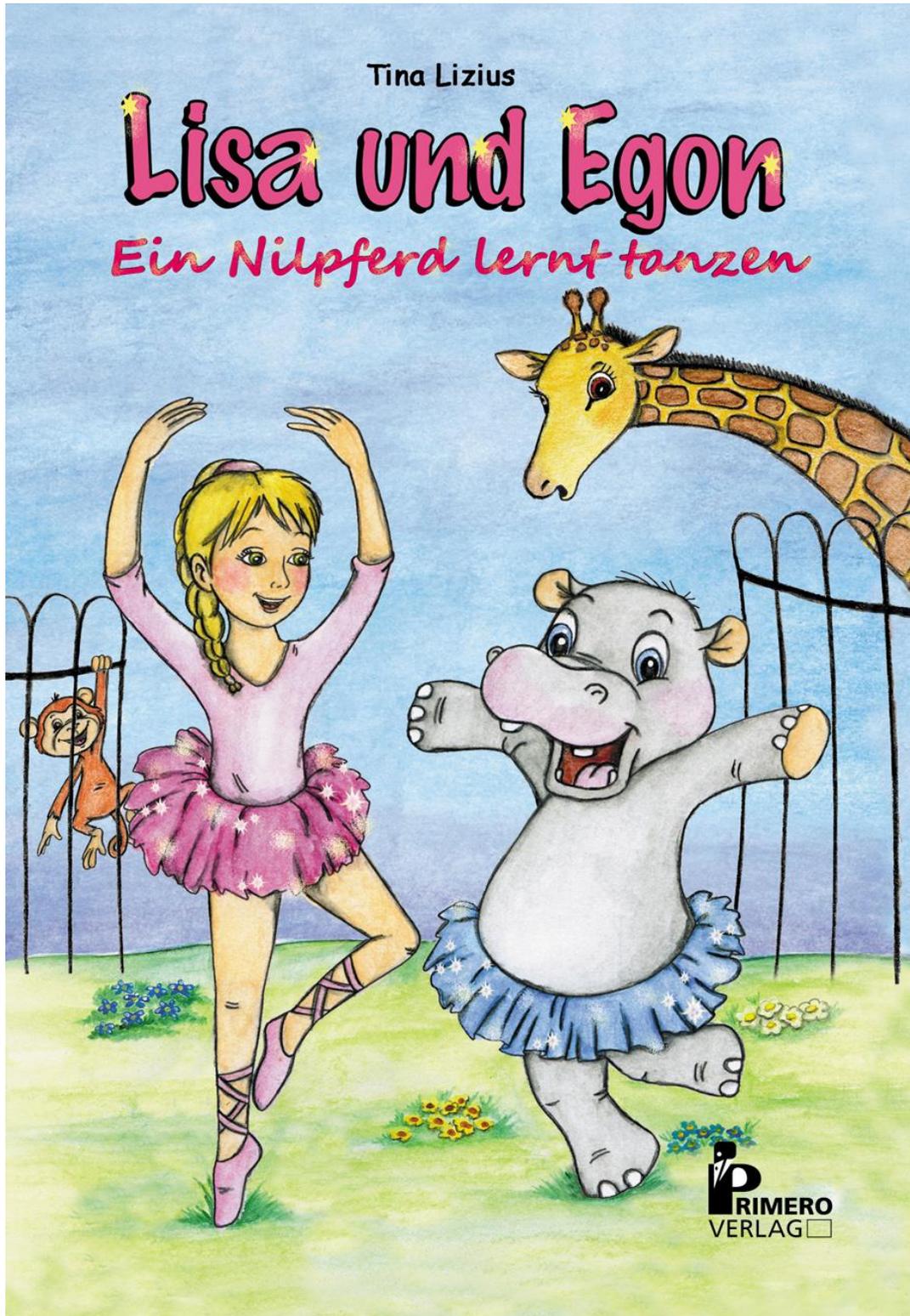


READING SAMPLE

Lisa and Egon – Teaching a Hippo to dance

By Tina Lizius



Egon, the little hippo, lives with his mommy and daddy, plenty of uncles and aunts and all his sisters and brothers in the zoo. The sun is shining and it is a beautifully warm day in summer. All animals are very happy. All animals except Egon.

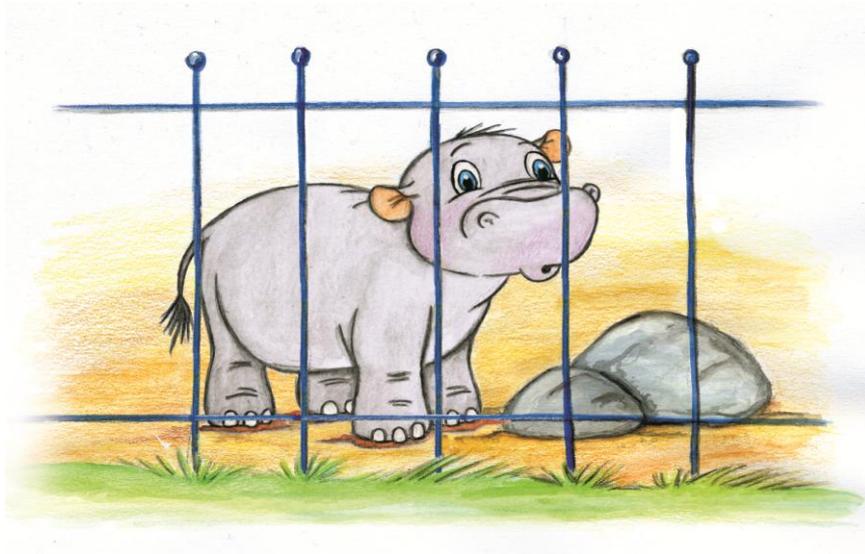
Egon is standing at the fence and watches yearningly as a children's birthday party is taking place on the lawn across from his compound. The trees are hung full of balloons and in the middle of the meadow is big table, decorated with a colourfully dotted tablecloth. In the middle of the meadow is a big table, decorated with a colourfully dotted tablecloth.



On the table is a very pretty cake, three layers high and frosted with cream. Eight candles have been put on top of it.

Suddenly six little girls with pink ribbons in their hair jump out of the bushes. They are wearing pink tutus and pink ballet shoes. The girls start to dance.

They pivot to a beautiful classical melody while holding up their arms into the air like little fairies. Then they jump with big leaps in a circle on the lawn – appearing as light as feathers. In the end, the girls stand in a row, holding hands and bow deeply in front of their excited audience.



“Ooohhh”, Egon sighs. He has never seen anything that beautiful.

“My, that was a pretty ballet show,” one of the mothers says.

“And the pretty tutus the girls are wearing as skirts”, her friend gushes.

“I see”, Egon thinks. “So that is called ballet. And the skirts are tutus.” He closes his eyes and imagines himself dancing in a tutu of his own on the green lawn.

Excitedly, Egon runs to his father. “Papa, papa, may I dance ballet, just like the little girls did just now?”

“But Egon”, father hippo says and cranes his neck up in indignation.

“You’re a hippo. A hippo wallows in dirt, swims in water and fights with other hippo kids for food. Dancing is not for hippos!”

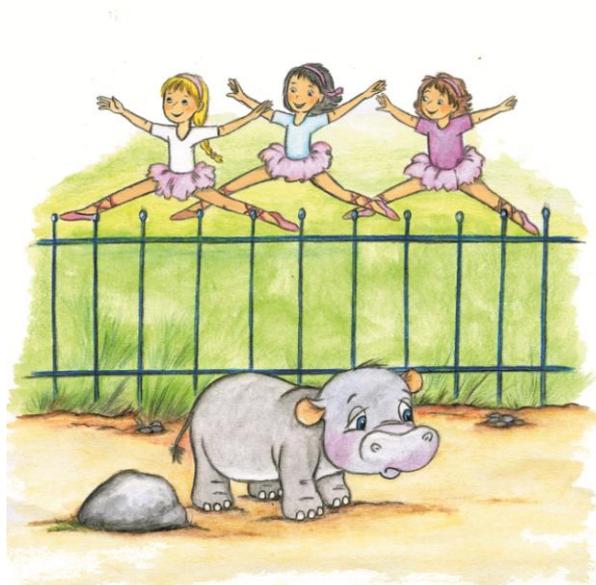
Egon trudges to his mother. “Mama... may I dance ballet, too?”

“But Egon,” Mama hippo says with a chuckle. “You’re not a girl and you don’t have delicate ballet feet, either. Besides, I don’t believe you’ll ever fit into a tutu. Why don’t you go and play with your sisters and brothers?”

With sad eyes Egon looks down at his feet. He truly does not have delicate ballet feet. They really are rather round and pretty wide. And if he keeps growing like this, he will surely be as big as his father very soon and then he will never fit into a tutu.

Egon returns to the fence and looks at the dancing girls, who have taken position in a circle and are pivoting on their spots.

Then they start circling in wide leaps on the lawn again, one behind the other. Feeling sad, he hangs his head. Nobody understands him!



“You look terribly unhappy.” One of the ballet girls suddenly tells him. “Did you not like our dance?”



“Oh, but I did!” Egon hurries to answer. “It’s just that...” and he hangs his head again. “I would love so much to dance ballet, too. But that doesn’t seem to be possible.” He adds quietly and looks at the delicate feet of the little girl.

“But why not?” the girls asks surprised. “Everybody can dance ballet!”

“Not if you’re a hippo and wallow in the dirt. That’s what papa says. And mama says that my feet are too big and won’t fit into ballet shoes. And my uncle laughed at me and even wanted to fight against me.”



Looking at Egon's big round feet the girl is thinking that surely everybody can dance ballet.

"What's your name?" the girl asks.

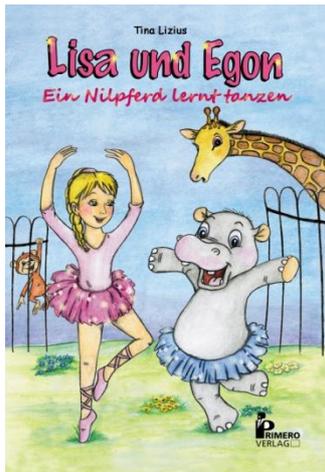
"Egon", Egon answers.

"I'm Lisa" says the girl. "Today is my birthday. My ballet teacher always says that everybody can dance. I could ask her if you could join our ballet class."

"Really?" Egon's eyes start to shine. But then he remembers something. "But I don't think a hippo is allowed to dance in a recital." Egon is absolutely sure that neither the ballet teacher, nor his parents would allow that.



Lisa thinks for a minute. Then she starts to grin. "Just you wait." She winks at Egon and returns to her friends.



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