**Penelope and Harold**

Sweet basil, turmeric, and ginger laced the hot humid air surrounding the Thai elephant camp as the Performing elephants were lining up to get ready for the stage.

As they rubbed their bodies against each other, the dust started to kick up and the sounds of their flopping ears, waving back and forth permeated the air.

One of the smaller elephants was wearing a pink outfit with lacey ribbons hanging down to her feet. Her name was Penelope and she did not like performing one bit.

She looked up into the wrinkled eye of her brother, Harold and said, “this tutu is too tight, my feet hurt and I’m feeling bloated today. I don’t want everyone watching me. I feel fat!”

Harold, who was wearing a majestic jeweled head piece, looked down at his sister and wrapped his trunk around her back. “You look adorable, Penelope, and you have to get over being so self-conscious. Just be yourself and everyone will love you.”

“Whoosh,” Penelope sighed. “Sometimes I wish I were even a human, like that silly looking woman with the wide brimmed floppy hat, drinking that foo foo drink.

Mr. and Mrs. Fleming were on their annual exotic vacation and were sitting under a thatched roof patio restaurant, overlooking the lineup of elephants as they were being lead down to the performing stage.

The waiter placed in front of them, two delightful looking cocktails, with attached hibiscus flowers and fancy, colorful umbrellas.

Mrs. Fleming peered under her wide brimmed hat at Mr. Fleming and said, “It’s a wee bit early for these don’t you think, Darling?”

“Nonsense!” as Mr. Fleming looked over his sunglasses at her. “We’re on vacation.”

Penelope shimmied her feet closer to the patio and leaned her floppy ears as close as she could.

“She doesn’t seem to care how funny she looks. Doesn’t she know that a fitted dress with heels is inappropriate for an elephant camp? But she seems utterly taken with herself, totally confident.

Maybe it’s something in that drink she’s having. I’m going to have to see what all the fuss is about and try some of that for myself.

Harold watched in dismay as Penelope strutted right up alongside the Fleming’s table and stuck her long trunk right in Mrs. Fleming’s glass and slurped most of the contents right down.

Before Mr. Fleming could close his mouth, Penelope fell back in line and continued down to the stage.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Harold cried. “Don’t you know that alcohol and elephants don’t mix?

“It mixes pretty well for me,” Penelope blurted, “I feel like dancing!” Harold rolled his eyes and the performance began.

He had to admit that Penelope looked more relaxed and was moving much easier. In fact as the show progressed, Penelope danced like she’s never danced before and stole the show.

The crowd was roaring until her grand finale when she slid down to her knees and snorted some pink liquid down through her trunk out onto the dirt. The trainer, trying to make it look like part of the act, led Penelope off the stage as she waved good-bye.

Back at their stalls Harold listened to Penelope snore all night long and welcomed the morning when she finally awoke and rolled over.

“I feel terrible; I have a headache that feels like an elephant is sitting on my head. It must be that horrible drink I slurped down.

“Well you gave the performance of a lifetime, Harold said. I didn’t know you could dance like that.”

“I didn’t either, said Penelope, but I’ll never be able to drink that funny sweet drink again.”

“You won’t have to”, consoled Harold. “Don’t you realize that all your special talents are right there inside you, just for the taking? You don’t need any magic potion to bring them out, just the belief in yourself.”

“I guess I am pretty amazing, Penelope batted her long eyelashes, I wonder what else I can do.”

“The possibilities are limitless. Harold used his trunk to smooth her brow. Let’s see where you go from here.”