

# Not THIS Bear!

*by Bernice Myers*

*Illustrated by Vesna Krstanovich*

Little Herman went to visit his Aunt Gert. He got off the bus at the last stop. But he still had a short walk to her house.

It was very very cold. And to keep warm, Herman pulled himself deeper inside his long furry coat. And he pulled his big furry hat down, down over his face. He looked just like a bear—which is funny, because that is exactly what a passing bear thought he looked like.

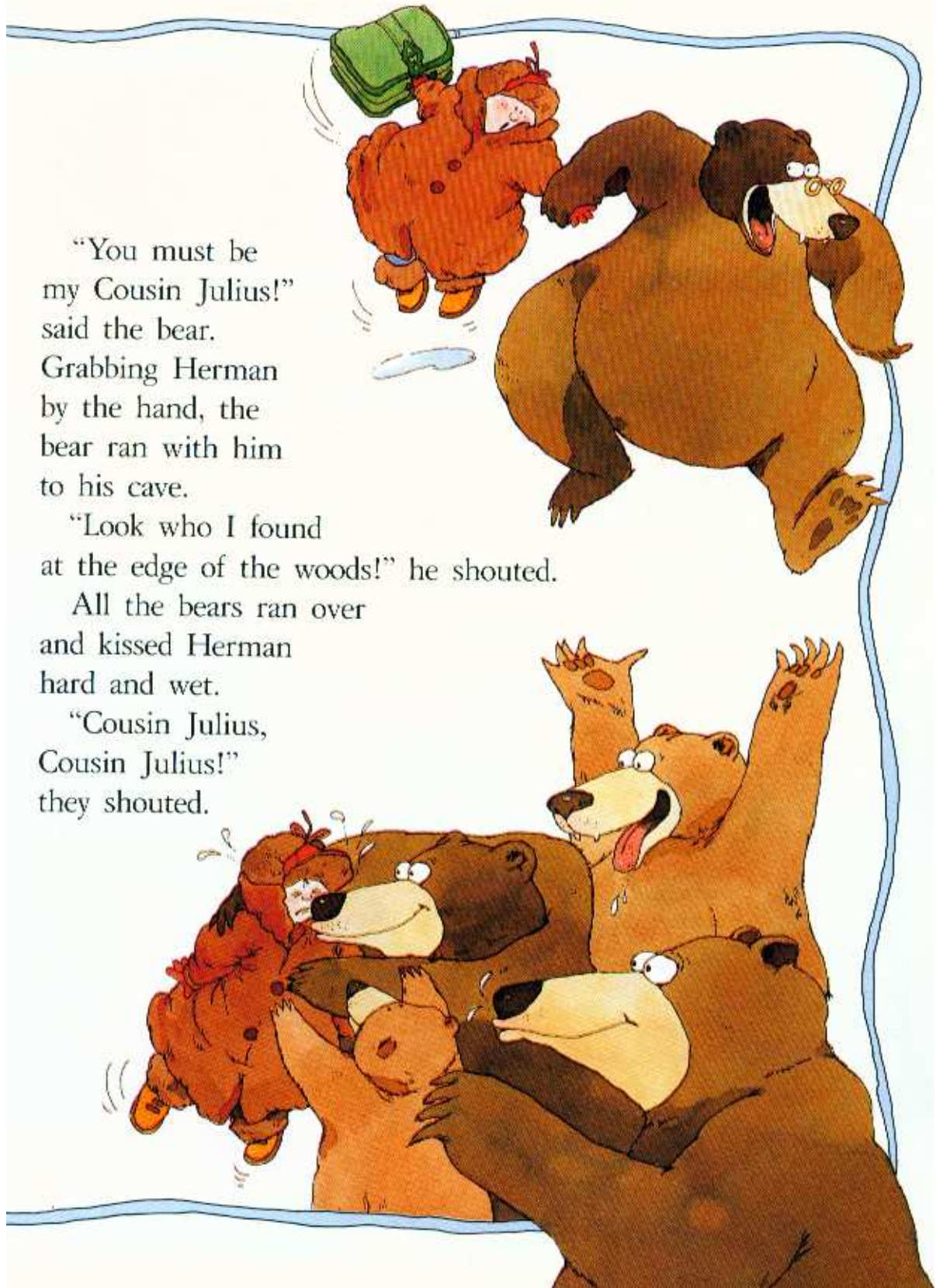


“You must be  
my Cousin Julius!”  
said the bear.  
Grabbing Herman  
by the hand, the  
bear ran with him  
to his cave.

“Look who I found  
at the edge of the woods!” he shouted.

All the bears ran over  
and kissed Herman  
hard and wet.

“Cousin Julius,  
Cousin Julius!”  
they shouted.

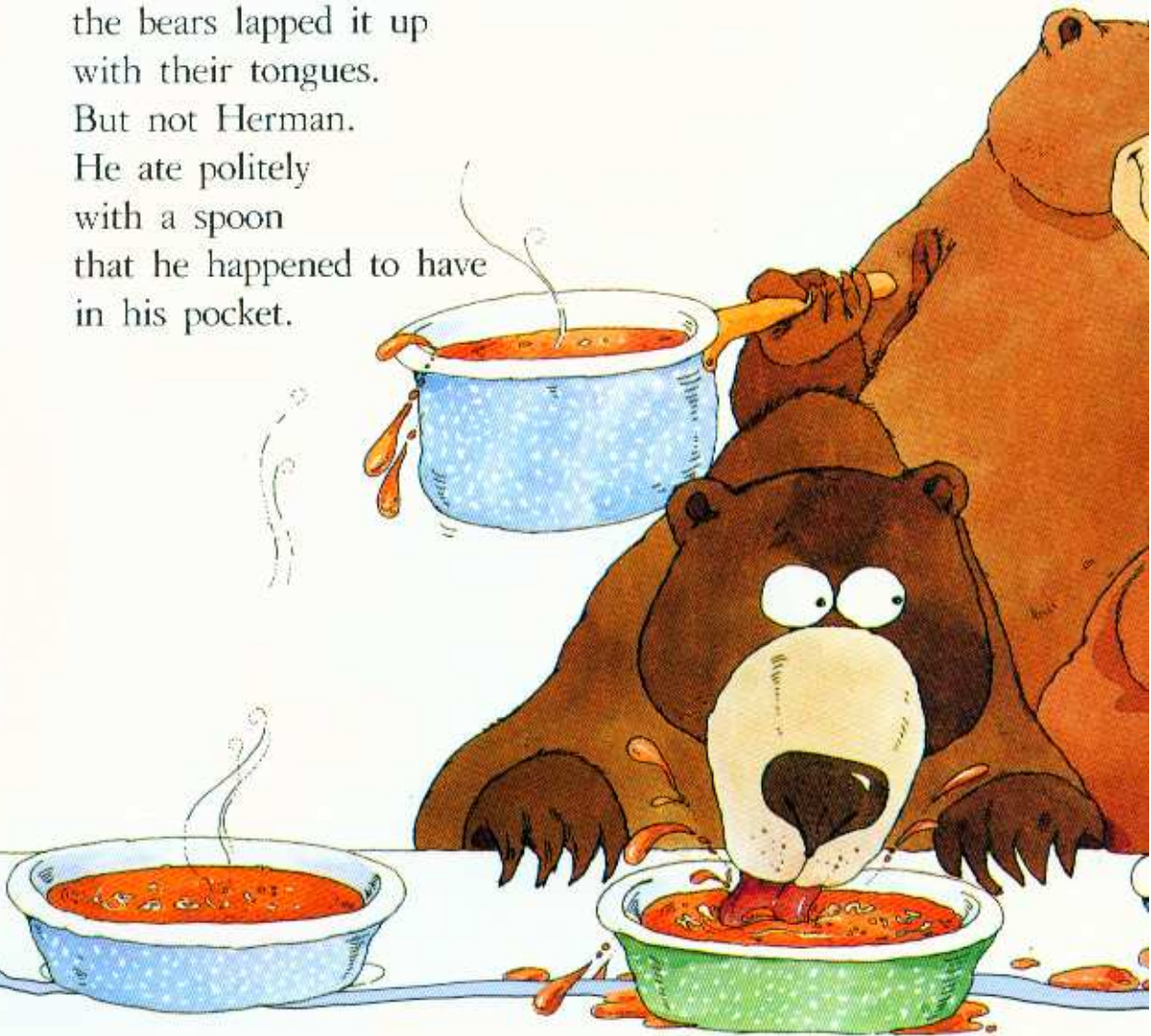


“My name is Herman,” said Herman.  
But no one even heard. They were  
so excited.

“I’m not a bear . . . ,” Herman said.

“Dinner is ready,” Mama Bear called.  
“Take your places. Cousin Julius, you  
sit here.”

When Mama Bear served the soup, all  
the bears lapped it up  
with their tongues.  
But not Herman.  
He ate politely  
with a spoon  
that he happened to have  
in his pocket.



And when the vegetables were served,  
Herman ate with a fork that he happened  
to have in his pocket.

The bears were amazed. "My, my!"  
Big Brown Bear stared at Herman.  
"How smart you are to learn a trick  
like that." And all the bears clapped, as  
if they were watching a circus act.



Poor Herman. He wasn't a bear. He was a little boy. He was sure of it. But the bears were just as sure that Herman was their Cousin Julius.

"So," thought Herman, "I'll just prove I'm really a boy!"

He began to sing  
and dance  
and whistle;  
tie his shoelace  
and  
stand on his  
head—  
—all the things a boy  
knows how  
to do.



But whatever he did, the bears still thought Herman was a bear. And they clapped even harder at his tricks.

“See what happens,” said Papa, “when a bear has a chance to go to the big city and learn a trade.”





“What a clever cousin we have,” said Big Brown Bear. And he yawned and went outside.

Big Brown Bear looked at the sky and announced the time of year—winter.

“After Mama’s big meal we won’t have to eat again until spring,” he said. And all the bears got ready to sleep.

“Remember, we sleep for at least two months,” said Big Brown Bear.



“Two months!” said Herman. “I only sleep one night at a time. During the day I go out and play. *I’m* not sleeping through the winter!”

“But all bears do,” said a baby bear.

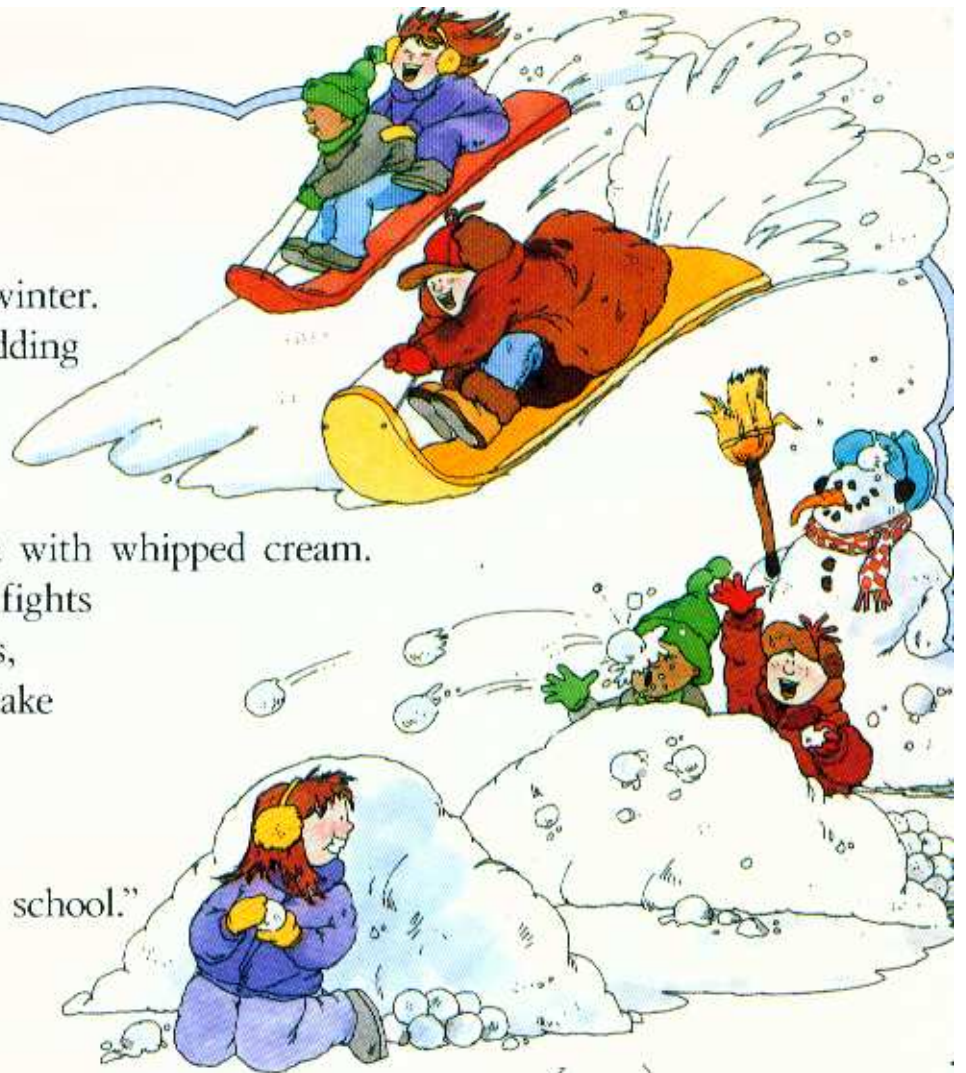
“Not **THIS** bear,” answered Herman.

“I like winter,” he said.

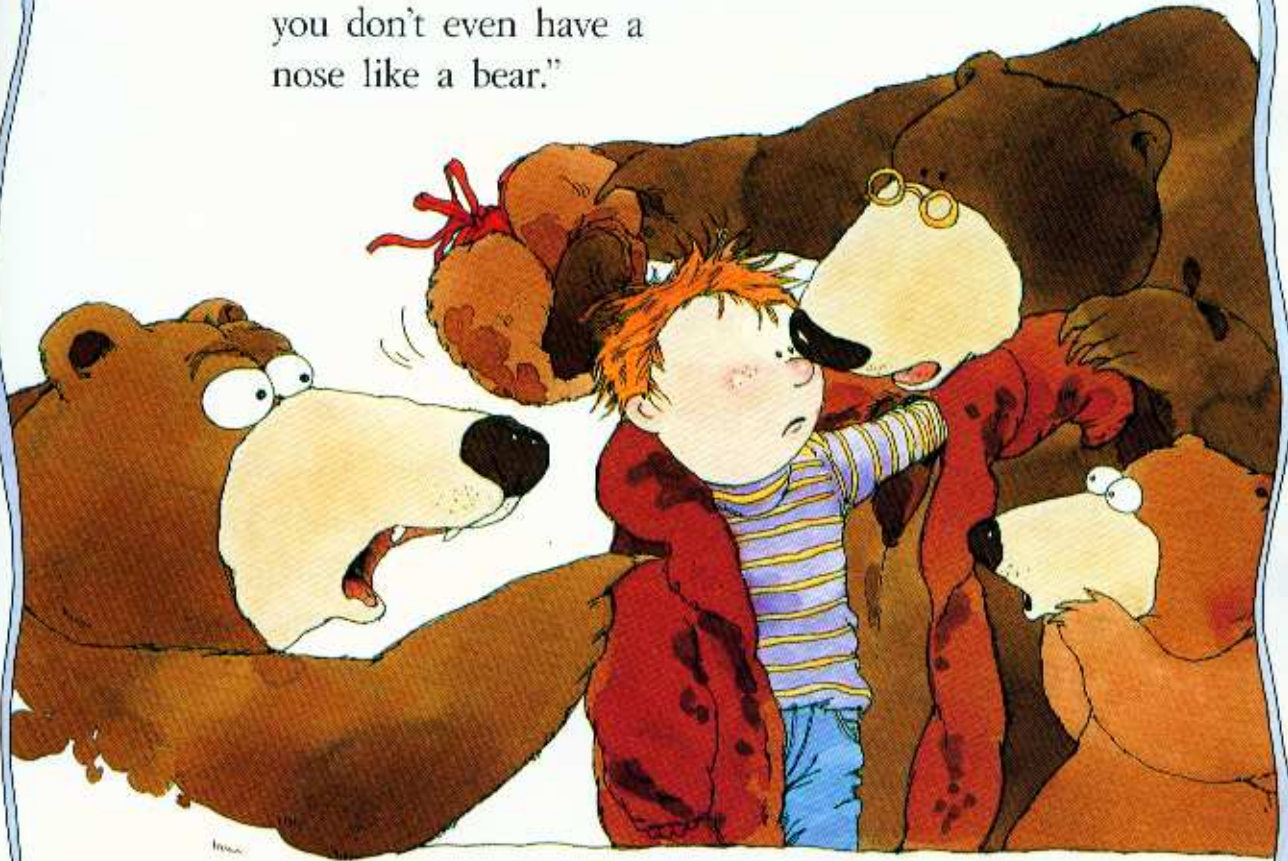
“He likes winter,” said the bears, astonished.



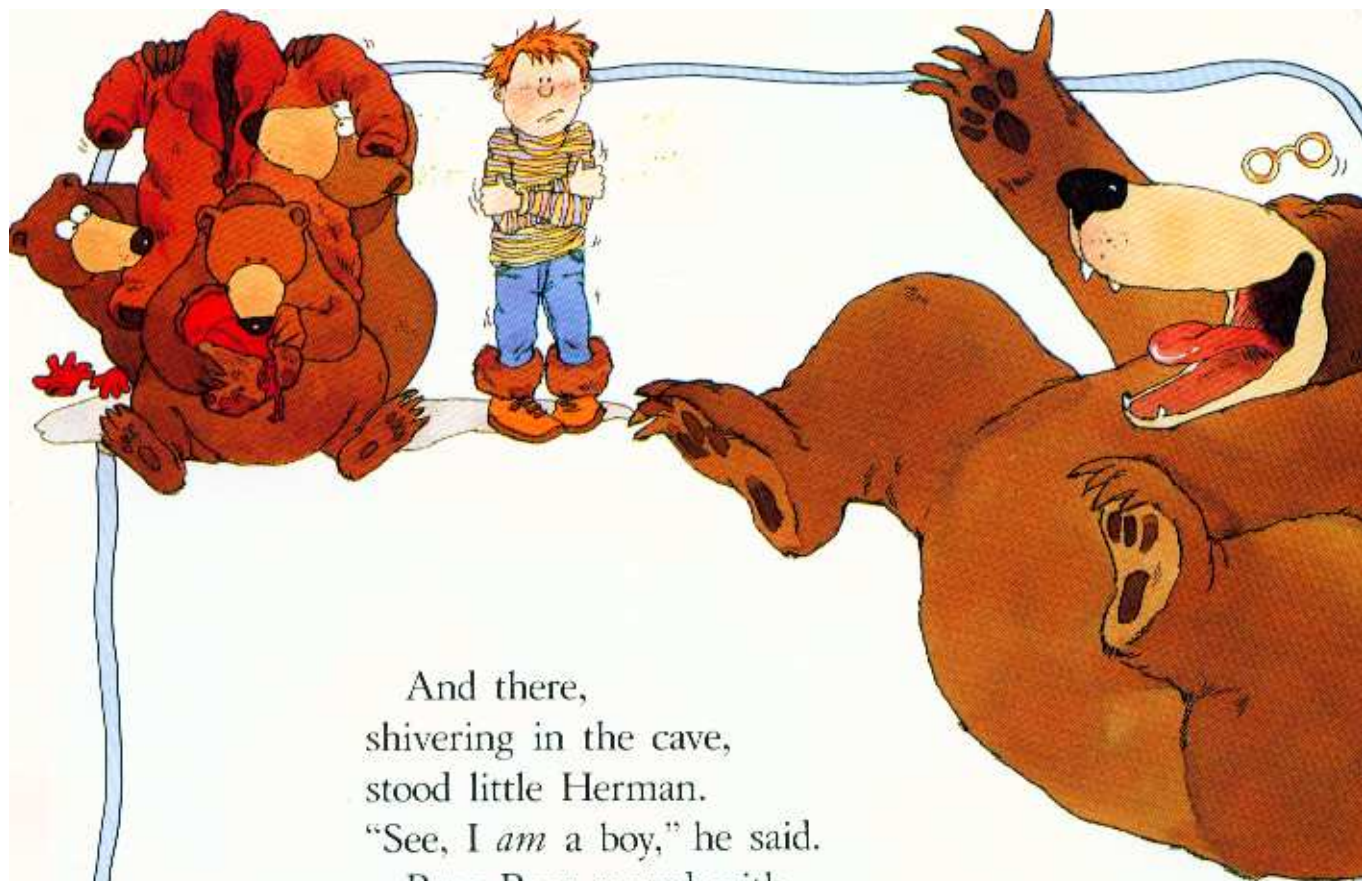
“Yes. I like winter.  
I like to go sledding  
and to skate.  
I like to make  
snowmen and  
drink hot cocoa with whipped cream.  
I like snowball fights  
with my friends,  
and I like to make  
giant tracks  
in the snow.  
And besides,  
I have to go to school.”



When Herman finished speaking, there was a long silence. Then Big Brown Bear spoke. "Perhaps you aren't a bear after all. In fact, now that I look closer, you don't even have a nose like a bear."



"Look!" shouted a bear, removing Herman's furry hat and coat. "He's not a bear at all."



And there,  
shivering in the cave,  
stood little Herman.  
“See, I *am* a boy,” he said.

Papa Bear roared with  
laughter. “That’s the best trick of all. And  
the trick was on us.”

Herman put on his furry hat and coat  
again. He said goodbye to all the bears.

“Come and visit us in spring,” they  
yawned after him.

“I will,” he answered, just to be polite.  
And Herman began to walk toward Aunt  
Gert’s house.

He was almost out of the woods when a big black burly bear jumped out from behind a tree. Running toward Herman, the bear shouted, "Cousin Bernard, Cousin Bernard . . ." But Herman ran just as fast as he could out of the woods.

Herman was glad when he finally reached Aunt Gert's porch. And Aunt Gert was very glad to see Herman.

