Not THIS Bear!

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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.