

Leave Herbert Alone

Everybody was always telling
Jennifer to leave Herbert alone.
Leave Herbert alone, said her mother.
Leave Herbert alone, said her father.
Leave Herbert alone, said her brother.

Herbert was the cat next door.
He was big and had a fat, bushy tail.
Jennifer liked him.
She wanted to play with him.
But every time Herbert saw Jennifer
coming...
...he ran away. He didn't walk away.
He ran as fast as he could.
And that made Jennifer feel bad.



Once Jennifer was playing with her drum. She saw Herbert sitting on the sidewalk. Jennifer was so happy to see him, that she dropped her drum with a crash and yelled,
“Herbert!!”

Then she started to run. But before she could get to him, Herbert turned and ran like mad. “Leave Herbert alone,” said her father. Another time Jennifer was passing Herbert’s house when she saw him eating a leaf on his lawn. She started to run to him yelling, “Herbert! Herbert! Am I glad to see you.” Herbert didn’t waste any time. He jumped into the bushes next to his house. Jennifer saw Herbert’s tail sticking out of the bushes. So she started to run again. But the tail disappeared, too. “Aw Herbert,” said Jennifer. She felt terribly.

“Leave Herbert alone,” said her mother.

Then there was the time that Jennifer tried to catch Herbert. She hid behind a tree and waited for him to walk by. And as soon as he did, Jennifer jumped out and grabbed him. “Herbert!” she screamed. But Jennifer had barely gotten hold of him when Herbert jumped out of her hands and ran away. And to make matters worse, her mother saw her. “I told you to leave Herbert alone. Now get inside!”

One day Jennifer was sitting on her front steps eating a tuna fish sandwich. She saw Herbert walking by. Jennifer started to get up. But then, she sat down. “He’ll just run away,” she thought. Herbert saw Jennifer. He got ready to run. Jennifer looked at Herbert. She didn’t want anybody to hear her so she said very, very quietly, “Hi, Herbert.” Herbert looked at her. Jennifer didn’t move. “Hi, Herbert,” she whispered. Herbert sat down right in front of her. Jennifer looked at

Herbert. Herbert looked at Herbert. Herbert looked at Jennifer. Nobody moved. Not even a little bit.

Jennifer felt very happy, but she still didn't want anyone to hear her so she whispered again. "Herbert, come here, Herbert." And she didn't move. Herbert came a little closer. Very slowly. Jennifer took a little piece of tuna fish in her hand and held it out to Herbert. "Here Herbert," she said softly. Herbert looked up and started sniffing.

He came a little closer to Jennifer. He sniffed. He moved even closer. He sniffed some more. Jennifer had never been so close to Herbert before without him running away. She was afraid he would run away. She was afraid he would run away now. So she sat as still as she could with the piece of tuna fish in her hand. And all of a sudden...

Herbert licked the piece of tuna fish right out of Jennifer's hand! Boy, was Jennifer happy! She picked her hand up very slowly and put it down very gently on Herbert's head. Then she scratched his head. Herbert made a sound. "Purr, purr, purr." Jennifer scratched some more. "Purr, purr, purr." Then Herbert jumped up on the step next to Jennifer and rubbed his fluffy head on her knee.

Jennifer's father was coming home from work just then and he saw Jennifer with Herbert. He started to say, "Leave Herbert alone." But he stopped. He saw that Herbert and Jennifer were sitting together. And he saw how happy they both looked.

Nobody tells Jennifer to leave Herbert alone anymore.

