

Herbert the Dermatologist (Three Pages)

Herbert the dermatologist was a bit of a hermit. When he wasn't at his office, he liked to tend to his daily chores. In the morning, he would feed his gerbil, exterminate termites, and keep an eye out for other vermin. After that, Herbert would clean his collection of ceramic mermaids.

After his day at the office, Herbert would plant geranium seeds in fertile ground where he was certain they would germinate. In the early evenings, Herbert would make preserves and pop popcorn kernels. At night, he would spoon out lime sherbert until bedtime.

Herbert was a kind man and a good dermatologist, but he was very reserved. Herbert was not the kind of person who made friends easily. He just didn't have the nerve. His days at the office were not very busy.

One day, a person came into Herbert's germ-free office. It was Bernice, the mermaid, who had an imperfect skin condition--scales. Although she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, Herbert told her that he could not perform an operation on her scales.

"Are you quite certain?" asked Bernice desperately.

"Yes," said Herbert, "your condition is long-term. It's permanent."

Beatrice began to perspire. "Who should I talk to next...the clergy? I've got to get rid of this imperfection!"

Herbert insisted that Bernice didn't need a sermon. He was usually reserved, but he felt a surge of emotion and exclaimed, "Stop persecuting yourself! There isn't a person around who think he's perfect. Besides, who else do you know with such a unique imperfection? Most people would walk through a herd of serpents, cross the ferocious Atlantic, and swerve into merging traffic just to see certified mermaid scales!"

Bernice felt a little better, but she still wanted to cover her scales for special occasions. She left Herbert's office and went to the store to buy some powder.

The clerk at the store had good merchandise: ferns, herbs, perfume, and kerchiefs. His name was Bert, and he was stern. He wore a derby that was too big for his head and a jersey that read, "Mermaid Scales are Imperfect." Bert had good merchandise, but he didn't have good interpersonal skills.

Bernice was so offended by Bert's jersey, that she left the store without her powder. "Jerk!" she yelled.

After a while, Bernice remembered what Herbert had told her about being unique. Maybe I don't need powder after all. Maybe these scales aren't imperfect. Maybe they are special. Bernice began to feel good about herself and enrolled for a term at the University.

Herbert found out about Bernice's improved disposition about her skin condition. Helping Bernice with her imperfection helped steer Herbert in the right direction. " I helped a mermaid," Herbert said to himself. He was no longer reserved.

That day Herbert said fifty percent more "hellos" than he had the day before. Before long, Herbert's practice reached its vertex. Herbert was even able to hire somebody to help him with his chores. He hired somebody who had a change in perspective too. It was Bert the clerk.

Bert knew that he had been a jerk as a clerk, and now he had better interpersonal skills. Now, Bert helped Herb feed the gerbil, exterminate termites, and keep an eye out for other vermin. Herbert gave Bert some preserves, popcorn kernels, and sherbert during his breaks.

Bert had had such a change in personality, that he tenderly dusted Herbert's ceramic mermaid collection. Also, whenever Bert walked into Herbert's office, he turned his jersey inside out.

Comprehension Questions:

What is a dermatologist?

What permanent skin condition did Bernice have?

Did Bernice learn to live with her special skin condition?

How did Herbert's demeanor change by helping Bernice?

Did Bert's personality change as well?

Sir Irving III (Two Pages)

Sir Irving III was a salesman from Irvington who was full of mirth. He never became involved in town skirmishes or shirked his responsibilities. He always wore a clean shirt and was not too firm with children. He was also a man who knew his business.

Sir Irving III sold girdles and skirts to the circus girls who passed through Irvington on the way to Girving. Sir Irving's sign read, "My girdles fit any girth, even if you're as big as a fir or as small as a birch."

The circus girls were wonderfully big and proud of their girths which they had had since birth. These girls were only satisfied with Sir Irving's girdles and skirts. He never shirked on the fabric. The circus girls could really twirl in his girdles and skirts. Then they too were full of mirth.

Sir Irving III also sold zircons and lemon squirt to thirsty rodeo cowboys working the circuit from Irvington to Girving. These cowboys were the first to give zircons to circus girls. They flirted with the girls while stirring lemon squirt and standing in their stirrups. The thirsty cowboys would say to each other, "If my girl is irked, I'll give her a zircon to avoid a skirmish."

The circus girls would twirl in their skirts and say things like, "Thanks for the zircon. It's not even my birthday!" Circus girls are never irked with cowboys

who stand in their stirrups handing out zircons. Instead, they are full of mirth. Of course, cowboys are never irked with circus girls who twirl in skirts. They too are full of mirth.

Sir Irving had a third business. He also circulated a paper called The Local Dirt.

He printed stories like "Circus Girls Can Twirl", "Zircon Cowboys", and "Chirping Bird Stirs Up Trouble at Sirloin Stop". The paper had a readership of one hundred and thirty, and every reader was full of mirth after reading one of Sir Irving's stories.

Thanks to Sir Irving's businesses, circus girls could twirl in girdles and skirts; thirsty cowboys could hand out zircons and drink lemon squirt; and people could read the third edition of the The Local Dirt. Now, virtually all the folks from Irvington to Girving were full of mirth, just like Sir Irving III.

Comprehension Questions:

- What were Sir Irving's three businesses?
- What is a girdle? What is a zircon?
- What does it mean to be "irked?"
- What does it mean to be "full of mirth?"