

The Boy Who Needed a Friend

Butters the Cat yawned and stretched in the afternoon sunshine. “Yaahhhnnnn” he said, as his big orange paw reached away from the pillow he’d been napping on. “Do you have to be so loud when you do that?” Pumpkin the Cat grumbled from his spot at the foot of the bed. Butters the Cat ignored the grumbling of his best friend Pumpkin. Pumpkin the Cat was always cranky when waking up.

Screech- Screech- Tissss. Both cats perked up their ears, listening to the sounds of the school bus, stopping in front of the house. “Yes!” thought Butters, “My favorite time of day”. Both cats, Butters and Pumpkin, jumped down from their napping spots and hurried downstairs to meet Adam, the son of their owners, at the door.

The front door swung open just as Butters the Cat reached the bottom of the stairs. “Hi Adam! I missed you so much. I had such a great nap today. How was your day?” he said while rubbing against Adam’s legs as he walked to the kitchen. Of course, Adam couldn’t understand exactly what Butters the Cat was saying, because humans don’t speak cat, but the cats could understand him. “Hey buddy, it’s good to see you.” Adam quietly spoke while reaching down to scratch the big orange cat’s head.

Adam tossed his backpack beside the kitchen table and sat down in one of the chairs. Pumpkin the Cat jumped up on the table and rubbed his face in Adam’s hand while purring. “Hey Pumpkin. You’re so lucky. You get to hang out with your best friend all day. I wish I had a friend to talk to at school. Today, Taylor made fun of my hair again on the bus, and no one wanted to sit by me at lunch. There’s a new kid, but I didn’t say hi to him because he probably won’t want to sit by me too.” Pumpkin and Butters both listened and enjoyed getting pets as Adam told them all

about his day at school. This routine occurred most afternoons, but Butters and Pumpkin began to worry about how sad and lonely school sounded for Adam.

“We need to do something to help him.” Butters the Cat said to Pumpkin after Adam had moved to the couch to play videogames. “I know, but what?”, Pumpkin asked. The two cats sat on the couch thinking of ways to cheer up their most special human. “I’ve got it!” exclaimed Butters the Cat, “I’ll jump in his backpack before he leaves, that way I can be his friend at school.” Pumpkin the Cat stopped licking his paw, and looked at Butters the Cat as he said “No offense, but you won’t fit in that backpack.” Butters the Cat repositioned himself on the cushion, suddenly aware of the extra size his fluffy, long fur added to him. “So if we can’t go to school with him, what can we do?” asked Butters the Cat. The two cats thought about this while lazily dosing off to sleep.

Adam looked over at his two friends, snuggled beside each other on the couch. He had always felt more comfortable and connected to animals than to humans. They were simpler, easy to understand, even if they didn’t speak human. If one of the cats didn’t want to be disturbed, they would move away from him, growl, or hiss. And if they wanted pets, they jumped on him, meowed, and purred. At school Adam couldn’t tell when other kids wanted to talk or when they didn’t. Sometimes they just wanted to talk to other kids but not him, and the only way he could tell was when they shushed him loudly or made fun of what he said. Kids were confusing. Cats were not.

For the next week, Butters the Cat and Pumpkin the Cat tried to think of ways to help Adam feel better after school. They tried greeting him with extra energy at the door, but Adam accidentally stepped on Pumpkin’s tail tripping over Butters the Cat. “We are not doing that again.” Pumpkin said to Butters. They tried bringing him gifts to show how much they cared, but

Adam didn't seem excited to find the mouse on his bed that Pumpkin worked so hard to hunt or the leaves and pieces of trash that Butters carefully collected for Adam in his shoe. They were more affectionate, even letting Adam rub their bellies. And they hated getting belly rubs. Nothing seemed to work. Every day Adam came home from school sad and hopeless.

"We've tried everything to cheer this boy up." Butters the Cat sighed as he spoke. "And I am not putting up with belly rubs if it isn't helping." Pumpkin grunted. It was mid-afternoon, and the two cats were out of ideas. Screech- Screech- Tissss. The bus sounded from the street. They hurried from their napping spots to greet Adam at the door. As the door opened Butters the Cat could see the other kids walking down the street, and it gave him an idea. Before he could think, Butters the Cat ran out the front door towards the other kids. "What is he doing?!" thought Pumpkin, alarmed, and annoyed. "I guess I better go with him."

Startled, Adam turned around to see the orange cat running across the front yard as Pumpkin raced past him, a grey blur, following Butters into the front yard. "No! Wait! Come back you two!" called Adam. Afraid his furry friends would get hurt or lost, Adam took off running after the two cats who were heading straight towards the group of kids on the corner. The kids, alerted by the noise, looked up to see a big, fluffy orange cat and a smaller grey cat running in their direction.

Butters the Cat reached the group of kids and stopped. "Now what?" asked Pumpkin. "I don't know." Replied Butters. "I just thought..."

"Oh, look at the cute kitties!" one of the kids said in a high-pitched squeal. Just then, Adam caught up with the group of kids and his two cats. He tried to pick up Butters, who wriggled out of his arms and landed on Pumpkin. "Harumph" coughed Pumpkin as Butters

landed on top of him. The kids in the group all laughed and watched as Adam tried to get both cats in his arms to carry them home.

The new kid that Adam still had not met, stepped around from the group of kids and asked “Hey, do you need help? I have a cat, so maybe I can pick one of them up for you.”

“Yeah sure. Thanks.” Adam said.

All of a sudden, Pumpkin the Cat understood Butter’s plan. “Ahh. Let’s get him to talk to the kids. Maybe he will make a new friend with our help.” Pumpkin thought. So Pumpkin the Cat let this new kid pick him up while Adam picked up Butters. “I think they’re both taking us back to the house now.”, said Pumpkin to Butters. “Yeah! We should let them pet our bellies if they want too.” Butters said, excited that his idea to run towards the kids was working somehow.

“They have never run out of the house like this before. I don’t know what happened.” Adam began to explain to the kid holding Pumpkin. “I have a tabby cat named ‘Tiger’, and he tries to get out sometimes.”, the other child replied. Adam opened the front door, and he and the new kid carried the two cats inside, careful to close the door fully before setting them down. “Thank you for helping me.”, stated Adam. “No problem. I love meeting cats. People say I’m kind of weird like that.”, the new kid replied.

Adam reached out his hand while stating “My name is Adam.” The new kid shook Adam’s hand while saying, “I’m Tommy. I just moved here from Nebraska.” Butters the Cat and Pumpkin the Cat plopped down on top of the two boys’ shoes, rubbing themselves on the kids’ feet, purring, and showing their bellies. Both boys reached down to pet the cats’ bellies and continued to talk about their interests and share stories about their pets. It seemed like only a few minutes had passed, but Adam realized they had been talking for half an hour. “I guess you better go. Thank you for helping me catch these guys.” said Adam. “It was cool meeting them, and you.

Why don't you sit with me tomorrow on the bus?" Tommy asked. "Sounds good." Adam tried to say without giving away his excitement and surprise.

Tommy left to go home, and Adam went to the couch to play his game. "I think our work here is done." Butters the Cat proudly told his pal, Pumpkin. The two cats scurried off to find a warm place to nap, tired after all the work they put into helping Adam make a friend.

Every day after, Adam sat with Tommy on the bus. He made a friend, and this helped him gain the confidence to talk to more kids. Adam started to realize that not all the kids at school were mean, and that there were a lot of kids he could make friends with. Now when he comes home from school, he is excited to talk to Butters the Cat and Pumpkin the Cat about his day. He tells them all about the kids he talked to, the games they played, and gives them all the pets they can handle. He still understands animals better than humans, but it's nice to have both in his life.