

# WISH LIST

**N**orthwick is a very special bear. He lives with a boy called Frank and his family. Both Northwick and Frank have nystagmus.

Going back to school after the holidays was always an odd time for Frank. He liked seeing his friends again. He liked learning new things. But he didn't like being reminded that his eyes made it hard for him to do things other children found easy. Like reading from the white-board, finding his friends in the playground, seeing what was for lunch in the school canteen, let alone catching a ball!

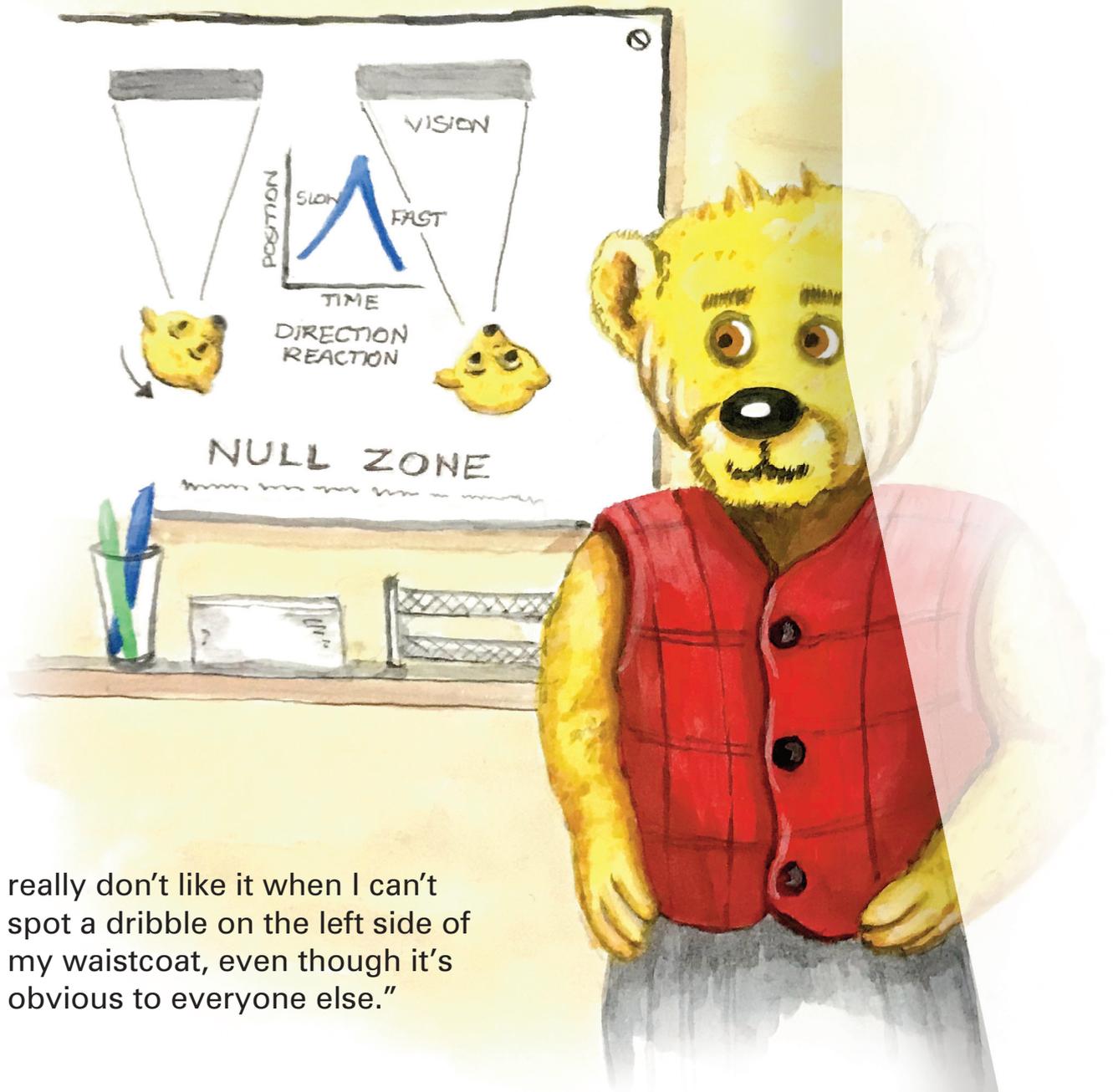
It was Friday afternoon at the end of the first week back at school, Frank and Northwick were in the kitchen waiting for tea. One of them was waiting much more keenly than the other. In fact, Northwick was chewing a colouring pencil so hard there wasn't much of it left.

While pulling a bit of pencil from between his teeth, Northwick asked Frank what he would most like to fix about nystagmus if he had the choice. Frank stopped colouring in and tapped the kitchen table with his pencil. Compared with Northwick's pencil, Frank's had only a few small bite marks.

"I think..." said Frank hesitantly between tapping his pencil on the table, "that ... I ... would like to see as fast as everyone else. Then I'd be able to play football and other games. People couldn't run around me before I could even see them. I could read what's on the white-board before it disappears. And I might even see what's for lunch before the dinner lady asks me what I want. So, having faster eyes is what I want to change most. What about you?"

Northwick said he wanted his flickering eyes to get completely better. But if he really **MUST** pick one thing, it would be the null zone. "I don't like getting teased because I have to turn my head to the left to see straight ahead. I don't like not being able to see people on my left-paw side. And I

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really don't like it when I can't spot a dribble on the left side of my waistcoat, even though it's obvious to everyone else."

### Multi-tasking chef

Frank and Northwick were thinking so hard about which nystagmus thing they'd like to fix most that they had forgotten about Frank's father. While they were talking he was listening as well as cooking fish fingers, chips and peas. Coughing gently to remind them he was there, Frank's father asked: "What about being able to see further? Wouldn't you most like to see as far as people with ordinary eyes?"

Frank and Northwick looked at each other in surprise. Northwick waved a paw in the air and insisted that Frank answered first. "Yes, that would be nice," Frank said, "but teachers know I can't see very far. So they let me

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sit at the front of the class, or enlarge work for me or let me go and look at things up close. But they forget that I see slowly. That's why I'd really like to see as quickly as everyone else who doesn't have flickering eyes."

Northwick added that it was the same for the null zone and turning his head to see. People didn't know what the null zone was and soon forgot if he tried to explain it. Some even laughed at his head turn or accused him of ignoring them. And hardly anyone believed that turning to one side helped him see better straight ahead.

"Like Frank and seeing slowly," Northwick said, "most people don't understand the null zone. Turning my head to see means I get into all sorts of bother. But when I say I can't see very far, everyone understands. And I have my monocular," he added, pulling the little black tube out of his waistcoat pocket. "So, if I really want to see something far away, I can use this."

### **Never miss an opportunity**

Frank added that when they were old enough to have smart phones they could use the cameras to see things in the distance too. "Just like Uncle Chris showed us," he explained. "You take a picture of things that are small or far away. Then you zoom in and abracadabra! You can see them!"

Right now, though, Northwick's very hungry nose had noticed that the fish fingers were no longer in the oven and his eyes had zoomed in on the plates Frank's father was carrying to the table. "That's given me a lot to think about," said Frank's father. "I suppose I'm like everyone else with ordinary vision. I always thought you'd simply want to be able to see as far as everyone else. But once again you've reminded me that nystagmus is much more complicated than that."