

A bear with NO NAME

He was a very unhappy bear. He had been sitting in the window longer than all the other bears. They all made fun of him because he could not see the name on his badge. He could read perfectly well, but the badge was just too far away for him to see, even with his glasses on.

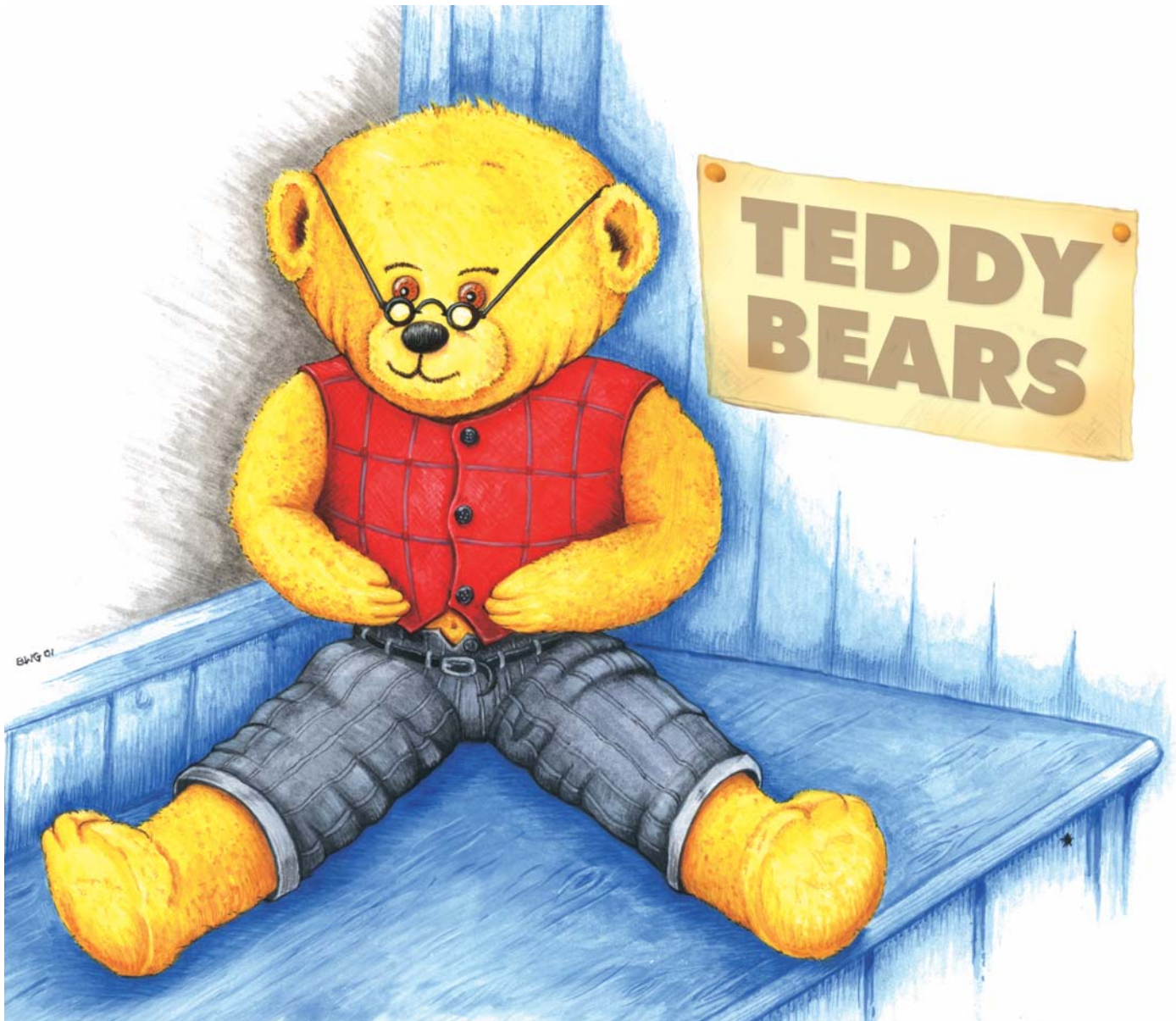
Today he was particularly unhappy. It was the last day of the week and the manageress had said that if no-one had bought him by the time the shop closed, he would be sent off to a jumble sale.

It was late and the toyshop would close soon. The bear, who was really a very nice bear, bigger than the average bear, with a very friendly smile and very well-behaved, had almost given up hope. But then he saw a young woman in a red jacket talking to the manageress and pointing at the bears in the window.

The manageress was shaking her head and frowning, and our unhappy bear, who could hear perfectly well even though he could not see very far, heard her say: "Well, we'd like to help you, of course, but I'm not sure we could give you a bear for nothing. Unless..." and she paused and looked straight at him, "You could have that bear in the corner. He's a bit dusty and takes up a lot of room. I was going to give him to a jumble sale anyway."

The manageress picked up the bear. He was half as big as her and she struggles to pick him up. Somehow, as she tugged him out from among the other bears, his name badge fell off. "I'm afraid he can't see very well and he doesn't have a name, but you're very welcome to take him for your raffle," she said, holding him at arm's length because he was so dusty.

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So that was it, he was to be raffled! The bear had just begun to hope that he would at last go to a nice home, but instead he was to be raffled. He could end up anywhere. This could be worse than a jumble sale.

And the winning ticket is...

And so it was that several weeks later, the bear found himself in a place called Northwick Park Hospital, There were lots of people there too. And they were all talking about someone or something that sounded like "Nice Agnes".

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Some of the people seemed very nice. But the bear had already made up his mind that he did not like all those who had bought raffle tickets, especially the one called the "Chairman". More than once, the Chairman – what a funny name, he didn't look anything like a chair – had picked him up by the fur on the back of his neck and waved him around.

At last, the Chairman said in a loud voice that "the moment of Teddy had finally come". This made some people laugh, but the bear did not think it was at all funny and decided it would be a very bad thing if the Chairman had the winning raffle ticket.



When the winning ticket was finally pulled out of a box, the bear screwed his eyes tightly shut and closed his ears (which is a thing bears can do). He hoped so much he would be going to a nice home with children who would not pull his fur, but he was too afraid to look or listen.

Safe at last

Finally someone lifted him up – but quite gently. The bear opened one eye and saw a woman smiling happily and hugging him so hard she almost knocked his glasses off. He opened an ear and could hear everyone clapping. This did not look so bad. At least he was safe from the Chairman.

The smiling woman told the bear he would be going home with her. There he would meet her little boy Frank who would be very pleased to have such a fine bear as his friend. There was just one problem, she said. What was the bear's name? The bear could not help, as he had never known his own name.

Just when things were looking up, the bear began to feel sad again. He had lost his name badge in the toyshop and now he would never have a name. Frank's mother looked unhappy too. "Every bear has a name. What can we call you?" she said. "I know. We'll call you Northwick! That's where I met you and it sounds a very fine name for a bear."

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“Northwick.” The bear rolled the word around on the tip of his tongue and then tried it out in his brain. It was a very respectable name for a bear. It had a certain style to it. It wasn’t too short and it wasn’t too long. It wasn’t too fat and it wasn’t too thin.

And it was better than the names of some of the bears in the toyshop. Can you imagine what it would be like to be called Winnie the Pooh? Another bear had been called Paddington. That wasn’t too bad as names go, but Northwick was not sure if it was really a bearish enough name.

Northwick was starting to feel a little tired after all the excitement. He was very glad when Frank’s mother carried him to her car and sat him on the back seat. “We’ll take you home to see Frank now. I’m sure he will be very pleased to see you,” she said. But Northwick was already fast asleep and snoring ever so quietly, as content as a bear with a new name can be.

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