

THE SPRAINED ANKLE SAGA

“When did I start wearing glasses?” Frank asked his mother. He had no idea where the question came from. It was simply something he wanted to know for no particular reason.

His mother was relieved it wasn't one of those “why” questions children ask, like Why can't I fly? Why is grass green? And Why is water wet? “Ooh, let me think,” she began “you had your first pair of glasses probably a couple of years ago.”

But without thinking about it, Frank already had a why question. In fact, he had two why questions: “And why do I wear glasses? And why don't they fix my wobbly eyes?”

Much to her surprise, Frank's mother could answer the first of her son's why questions. “You started wearing glasses because I twisted my ankle,” she said, knowing that both Frank and Northwick would find her answer surprising.

More than surprising. Frank looked perplexed, puzzled, baffled, bemused and even a little bewildered. Northwick just looked plain confused. “What,” asked Frank “has you twisting your ankle got to do with me wearing glasses?”

“Well, it was like this,” said Frank's mother. And she settled back to tell them the saga of her twisted ankle and Frank's glasses. The day of her ankle accident she was taken to hospital by ambulance. So, when Grandpa brought Frank home from school that afternoon, his mother wasn't there like she normally was. Instead, their neighbour, Janet, was in the kitchen helping out.



Mistaken identity

“You probably don’t remember this Frank,” his mother said, “but you thought Janet was me. We’d been wondering whether glasses would help you for some time. The fact that you mistook Janet for me finally made up our minds. So we went to the eye hospital and a few weeks later you had your first pair of specs.”

His mother was right. Frank had no memory of mistaking Janet for his mother. But he did know that it was almost impossible to recognise people if he wasn’t wearing his glasses. It wasn’t easy to recognise people even with his glasses on. But without them everyone was a blur.

Northwick, meanwhile, had been feeling his ankles to check they weren’t twisted or sprained. After all, his ankles had a lot of work to do carrying him around all day. “Did it hurt much when you sprained your ankle?” he asked Frank’s mother.

“At last!” she said, “Thank you Northwick. Some sympathy! Yes, it hurt a lot. At first the doctors thought I might have broken my ankle. Luckily it was only a sprain, although that was painful enough.”

“But your ankle did get better, didn’t it?” Northwick asked.

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“Yes, it took a while. I hobbled around for weeks. But it got better in the end. And, before you ask, no I didn’t eat a lot of cake to make it better,” Frank’s mother replied, narrowing her eyes at Northwick, but smiling at the same time.

“I hadn’t thought of needing to eat more food to get better!” cried Northwick (although if you could see inside his brain like I can you’d know that wasn’t entirely true). But the bear did have another question: “If doctors can fix a twisted ankle, why can’t they fix our wobbly eyes?”

That’s a pity

Frank’s mother paused and thought. “I’m not sure I can answer that. I suppose it’s because nystagmus is a lot more complicated than a twisted ankle. But I do sort of know the answer to Frank’s other question. Do you remember you also asked me why glasses don’t fix your wobbly eyes?”

Frank nodded and his mother went on: “It’s because you have a few other very ordinary things wrong with your eyes. You’re short-sighted for instance. And the glasses fix that. Unfortunately, you still can’t see as far as most people, but that’s because of the nystagmus. So, glasses help with some things, but not everything. I did say it was complicated.”

Frank had guessed as much. If there was a simple answer to wobbly eyes, he was sure the doctors would have found it already. He would just have to live with his flickering eyes for now. “That’s a pity,” he said, then added: “Anyway, I’m glad your ankle is better now. I do sort of remember a time when you were on crutches.”

Northwick grumbled: “I do too. We didn’t eat as well as we normally do!”

Frank’s mother grinned and said: “Thank you Northwick. I’ll take that as a compliment. But don’t say anything to Janet next door about her cooking. After all, it was very kind of her to help out, wasn’t it?”

“The Sprained Ankle Saga” – a new Northwick story available only on www.northwickbear.com. (October 2016).