

# CHAPTER 1

**T**his is  
Charles McGuffin.



It isn't *actually* him. It's just a picture of him.  
OF COURSE. If you hadn't figured that out, this  
book will be way too difficult for you and you

should probably go and read *The Really Simple Book of Dead Easy Stories for Total Numptyheads* instead.

Charles McGuffin was just like you and me. Well, he wasn't like me because I'm big and hairy, and Charles is small and pretty smooth. So he's just like you. Except he has a you-know-what, and I'm guessing many of you reading this don't have a you-know-what. So Charles is like *some* of you.

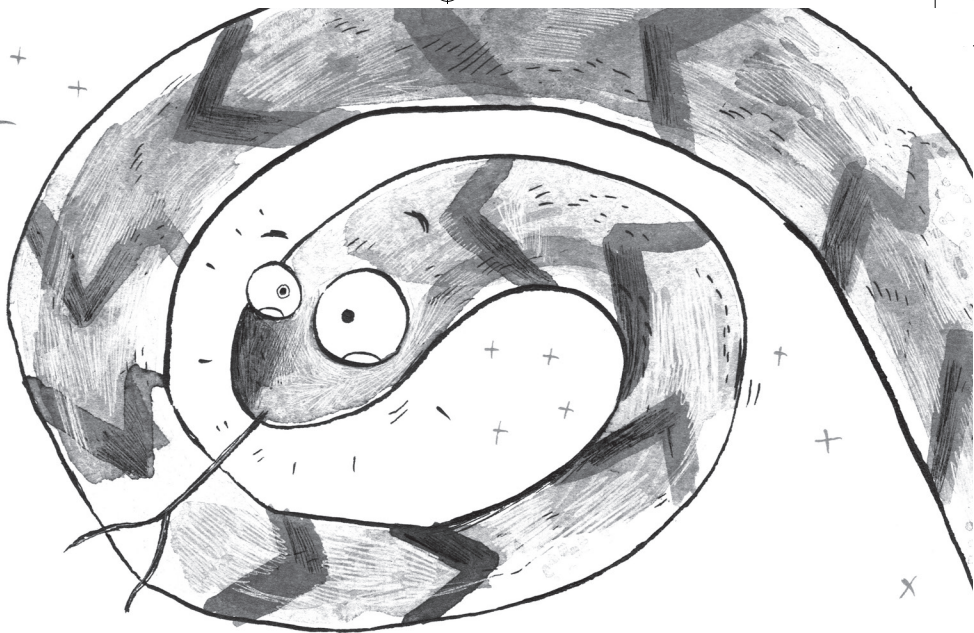
Except for one **MAJORLY HUGE, MASSIVE** difference.

He can change into animals.

As in, one minute he's a normal boy, the next minute he's a wolf.

Or an armadillo.



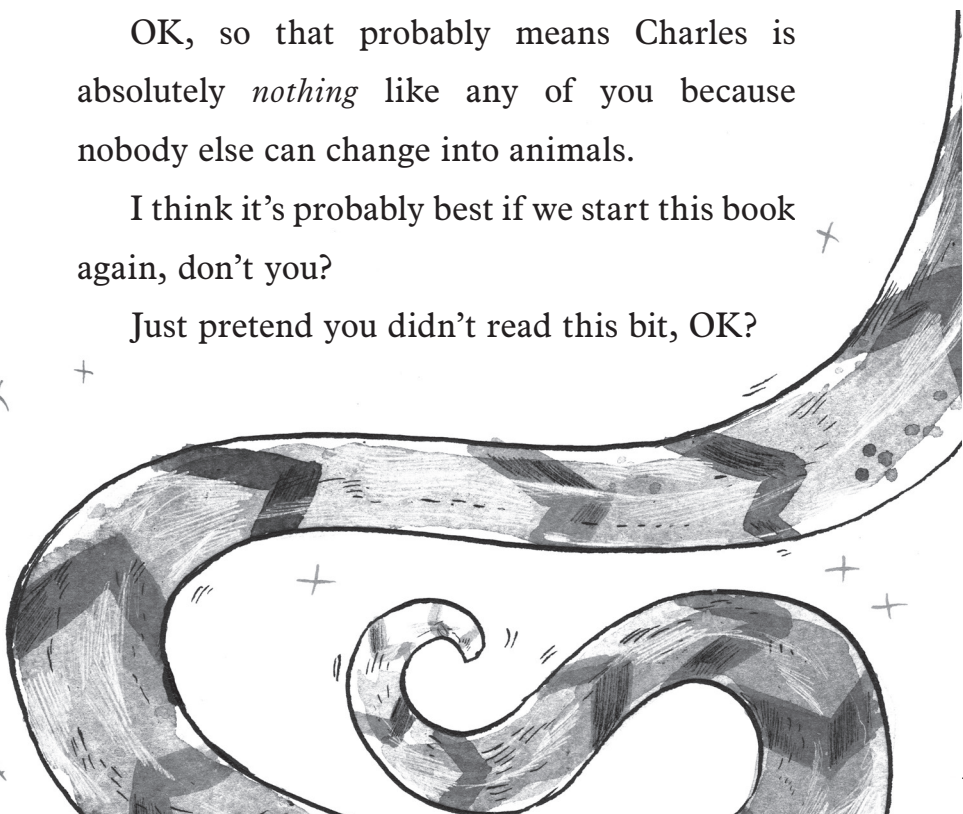


Or a danger noodle (which, as everyone knows, is the actual scientific name for a snake).

OK, so that probably means Charles is absolutely *nothing* like any of you because nobody else can change into animals.

I think it's probably best if we start this book again, don't you?

Just pretend you didn't read this bit, OK?



# CHAPTER 1 (AGAIN)



**T**his is Charles McGuffin.

It isn't *actually* him. It's just a picture of him. **OF COURSE.**

Charles McGuffin is absolutely nothing like you or me. He is totally, completely different. Charles is *unique*. Because Charles can transform into animals. Like danger noodles.

Now, Charlie<sup>1</sup> was a pretty normal boy until about three weeks after his ninth birthday. He'd just come back from visiting his older brother, SmoothMove, at the hospital for the zillionth time. SmoothMove was quite ill and had been in hospital for ages and ages. This was really annoying because Charlie was convinced he could now beat his brother at *FIFA* on the PS4 and wanted to prove it. Also, the den in the garden needed mending and Charlie couldn't do


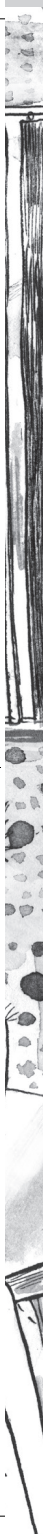
<sup>1</sup> Although he's called Charles, everybody calls him Charlie for short, which is pretty silly because Charlie actually has the same number of letters as Charles.

P.S. This is called a footnote. It's called a footnote because when a clever person from ancient Greece thought of something really important and absolutely had to write it down so they didn't forget it, but didn't have any paper to write it on, they used to write it on their foot.

You know what, I'm not too sure about that fact. Don't trust me on that one.







it by himself. And sometimes Charlie just wanted his brother back so he had someone to play hide-and-seek with. Playing hide-and-seek by yourself isn't much fun – Charlie had tried.

If you're very clever, you might have guessed that Charlie's brother isn't *actually* called SmoothMove, but woe betide<sup>2</sup> you if you were to call him anything else. Charlie's brother's actual name was Henry, but after a lifetime of being called Horrid Henry he would punch anybody right on the nose if they called him by his real name. He was twelve years old, sick of hospital and could still easily beat Charlie at *FIFA*, no matter what Charlie said. And he might have a girlfriend, but he would punch you on the nose if you said, 'SmoothMove has a girlfriend.' In fact, you'd do well to come away

<sup>2</sup> Well spotted! It's another footnote. You're probably wondering what 'woe betide' means. Well, only parents and teachers are allowed to say, 'Woe betide you . . .' It's the law. But, if you want some fun, next time a teacher or parent says, 'Woe betide you,' ask them what it means. What it means *exactly*. You will probably see steam coming out of their ears and you'll get into more trouble but it will be worth it.

from any conversation with Charlie's brother without getting punched on the nose for one reason or another.

As soon as Charlie and his mum and dad got home from visiting SmoothMove, Charlie ran straight upstairs to his bedroom. He dived into his bed, under his duvet, and tried not to think about the **'big scan'** that his brother had just been telling him about. After a while, he wiped his eyes and propped the duvet up with a tennis racquet to turn his bed into a tent. Once the tent was steady and stopped collapsing, he switched on his torch and began reading his favourite book. Charlie's favourite book was about volcanoes. It had pictures of massive explosions and orangey-red lava, and he liked to imagine he was escaping certain death by sliding down the volcano, surfing lava and dodging explosions.

The sound of his parents arguing downstairs



rumbled through the house, low like thunder. Charlie closed his book. He couldn't concentrate. Darkness had fallen outside, and the street light outside Charlie's window was making uncanny shadows on his bedroom wall. The silhouettes of the tree branches looked a little too much like long, clutching witches' fingers for Charlie's liking, so, quick as a flash, he sprang out of bed and pulled his curtains together.

It was there and then that it first happened.

It began with a twitching in his eye. Charlie froze to the spot, feeling his eyelid blink manically. His eye had twitched before, when he'd been tired, but this felt different somehow. It felt like somebody had just plugged him into a wall socket. The twitching spread to his other eye, and both eyes were blinking and twitching.

A feeling burst through the whole of his body, like he'd just been shot through an

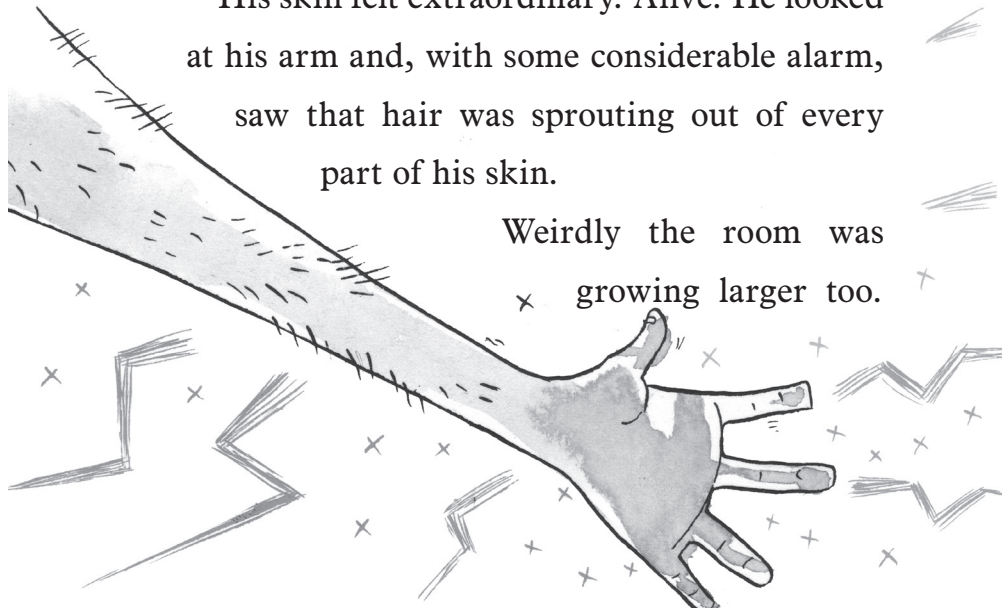


electrical wire, like *he* was the electricity. Every part of his body **FIZZED** and **HUMMED**.

The fizzing and humming became stronger, until he felt he was on fire, but a fire inside a never-ending tube, squeezed and vibrating.

His skin felt extraordinary. Alive. He looked at his arm and, with some considerable alarm, saw that hair was sprouting out of every part of his skin.

Weirdly the room was growing larger too.



But no, Charlie realized, the room wasn't growing larger – it was him who was shrinking! Smaller and smaller he shrank, the room growing ever larger around him.

And his body – Charlie hardly dared look – his body was transforming. Completely. Extra legs were growing out of him (which is every bit as gross as you could imagine). And finally he felt new eyes emerging out of his head (which was possibly even grosser than the new legs).

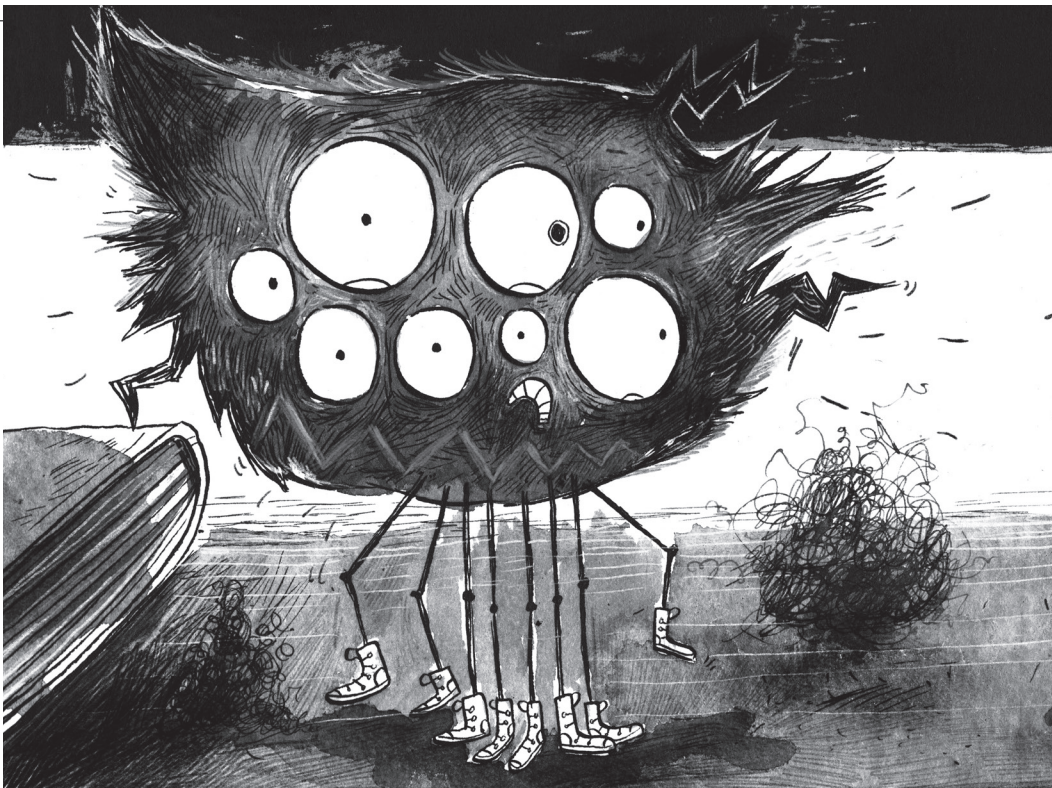
Charlie recognized almost immediately that he was turning into a spider.

And how did Charlie know this?

He looked at the *evidence*:

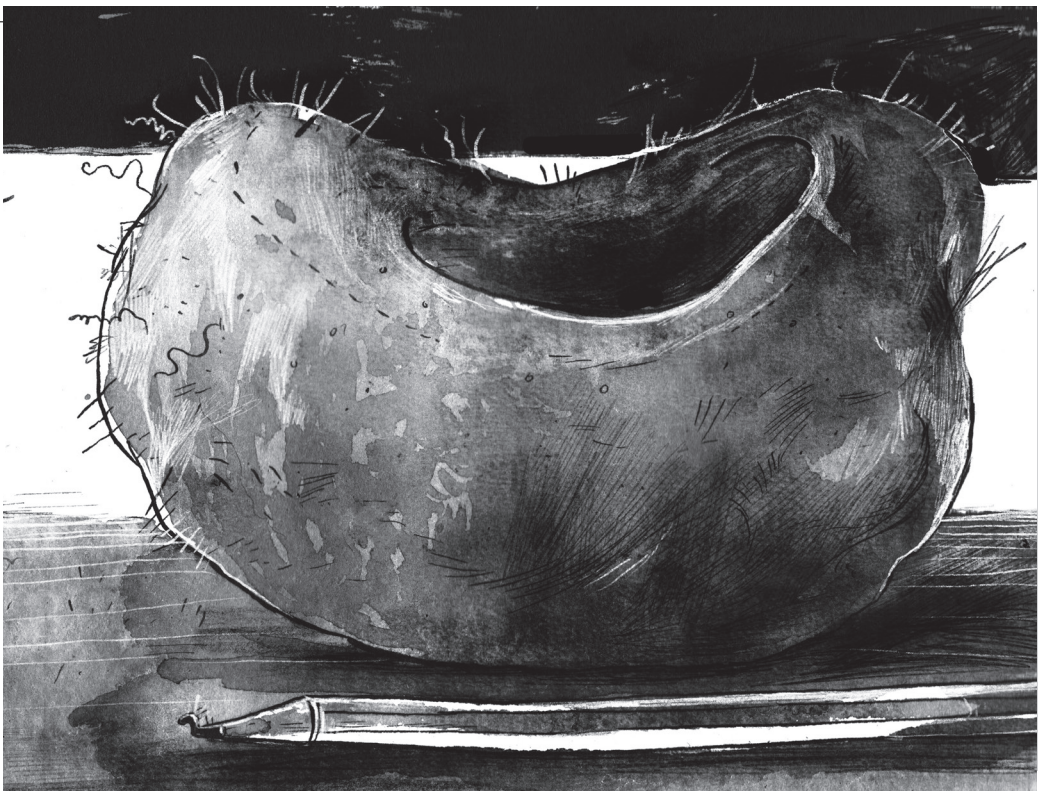
**EVIDENCE 1:** Charlie was now tiny. Admittedly he hadn't been that huge before he changed, but he could see a dried apricot under his bed that he'd been saving for a rainy day, and he was now about the same size as the apricot. And normal nine-year-old boys usually aren't the size of dried apricots.

**EVIDENCE 2:** Charlie counted his legs and he



had eight of them, which is about six too many legs for a human, but just the right number for a spider.

**EVIDENCE 3:** He was completely covered in short brown hair. Now, being covered in hair didn't necessarily stop someone from being human – take Charlie's Uncle Pete, for instance. Uncle Pete had taken Charlie swimming once and



when he took off his T-shirt he had a back so covered in thick tufty hair a gorilla would have been jealous. All the other children had stopped and stared, wide-eyed and jaws agape, as Uncle Pete stepped into the pool, back hair fluttering in the breeze. Charlie had tried to forget this ever happened but the more he tried to forget Uncle Pete's Hairy Back, the more it stayed in his brain because brains are annoying like that.



**EVIDENCE 4:** Charlie was able to look nearly all the way behind himself, without even turning round. He reached up with one of his new, long, spindly black legs and carefully counted his eyes. There were eight.

Eight legs? Eight eyes? Veeery suspicious.

So Charlie looked at all the suspicious evidence and added **small + hairy + eight spindly black legs + eight eyes** together and got **spider** as the answer because it is a well-known fact that spiders are hairy and have eight legs and eight eyes. It's a less-known fact that spiders also have eight bums,<sup>3</sup> which is both disgusting and messy and also costs spiders loads of money in toilet roll.

Charlie sat on the floor and considered his

<sup>3</sup> If you are very clever, you will have realized that this is not actually a fact. It is actually completely untrue. Spiders only have one bum, for which they are very grateful. However, if everybody reading this can convince as many other people as they can that spiders DO have eight bums, then that would be awesome and the world would be a better place. So, if you have younger brothers and sisters, start by getting them to believe that spiders have eight bums.

predicament. He had turned into a spider and he had no idea how to spider. He'd had lots of practice being a boy, but zero practice spidering. After a short while just sitting there being a spider, Charlie came up with a plan. The plan had two simple steps. They were:

**Step 1: PANIC!!!**

**Step 2:** Shout to his mum to come and help.

He successfully carried out the first step of his plan. This mostly involved flapping his spindly legs in the air. After he'd panicked for an appropriate length of time, Charlie attempted to carry out Step 2.

Step 2 was unsuccessful. And why was Step 2 unsuccessful? Have you ever heard a spider shout? No. Of course you haven't. Because spiders can't shout. Spiders can't mutter, whisper, talk, chat, gossip, jibber-jabber or yodel in any way, and they definitely can't shout for help.

After a few seconds of silent shouting and

furious leg-waving, Spider-Charlie sat on the floor, next to the fluff-covered apricot, and realized that Step 2 of his plan was just not going to work. So he decided to go back and repeat Step 1.

# PANIC!

