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opening extract from

Spook School: Curse of the Rat Beast

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published by

STRIPES PUBLISHING

An imprint of Magi Publications

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please print off and read at your leisure.

This story is dedicated to Fairlight Primary
School, Brighton, who 'really like' my funny
books, and 'adopted' me Spring 2009 ~ PJ

For Söloog-Hü the ancient Norse God of
Pencils, to whom I devote my existence ~ TP



STRIPES PUBLISHING
An imprint of Magi Publications
1 The Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road,
London SW6 6AW

A paperback original
First published in Great Britain in 2009

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ISBN: 978-1-84715-092-9

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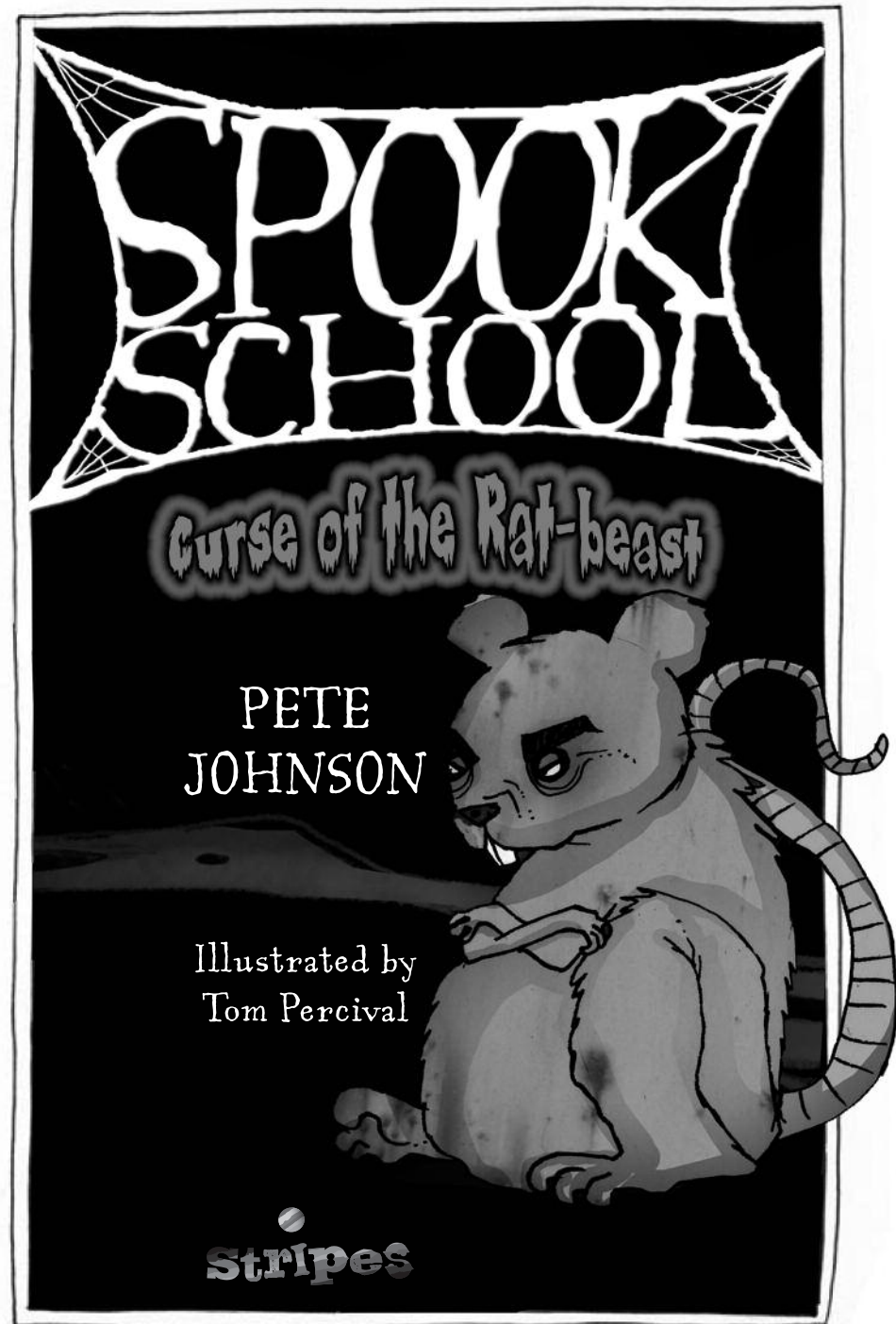
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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the UK.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Chapter One

I Turn into a Bat



It was a horrible slimy slug.

I concentrated hard and said, “Now, slimy slug, fly on to Lewis’s nose.”

The rest of the class watched the slug soar over to Lewis, who was so busy doing his homework he didn’t notice it circling round him. It was only when the slug settled on his nose that Lewis suddenly shot up into the air.

“What’s that?” he shrieked.

SPOOK SCHOOL

The whole class fell about laughing. “You did this, Charlie,” cried Lewis. “Of course I did,” I said.

I can make slugs appear out of nowhere. And scary spiders. And anything else, because I’m a ghost. So is everyone else at this school. Only we’d much rather you called us spooks.

I’ve only been at Spook School for a few weeks, and to begin with it was all pretty scary. All of us spooks hang out in this huge, grey building surrounded by fog. There are long, dark corridors too, with thick cobwebs everywhere. It’s a bit like wandering into a horror film, when actually, you’re at school.

I wasn’t too chuffed about having lessons again, but here we learn



SPOOK SCHOOL

awesome stuff like how to fly and walk through doors and, of course, how to make things appear out of thin air. And tonight we were going to find out how to shape-change. I couldn't wait.

Our teacher, who's called Top Ghoul, began the lesson by saying, "You're each going to change into a small, brown bat. I want you to imagine you're looking at that bat now. Try to see it as clearly as possible in your head, then shout, 'Shape-change'."

We all focused on the bat, yelled, "Shape-change", and waited. Nothing happened.

"Concentrate harder," she said.

Now the room was so quiet you could have heard a cobweb fall.

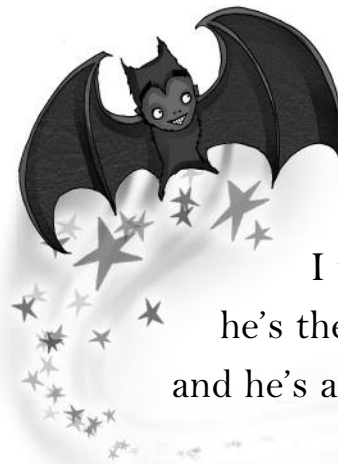
SPOOK SCHOOL

"Shape-change!" I bellowed, trying really hard. And suddenly, I'd done it.

I'd turned into a bat. The first one in my class.

The next spook to turn into a bat was Lewis.

I was pleased about that, as he's the first spook I met here, and he's also my best friend.



“How cool is this?” cried Lewis, swooping about.

“It’s amazing,” I replied.

Very soon the room was teeming with bats fluttering and diving about.

“This is a top lesson, Top Ghoul,” I said, looping the loop.

“Good,” she said. “But that’s long enough for your first attempt. It’s time to get back to normal. Now all concentrate hard and say, ‘Shape-change back’.” She waited while we all changed back, before adding, “And I don’t want any of you practising shape-changing out of my lessons. Is that clear? It could be dangerous on your own.”

Dangerous! What did she mean by that?

After lessons finished we all floated back to the dormitory, talking excitedly about the shape-changing. It was getting light and we should have been getting ready to go to sleep (yes, all spooks sleep in the daytime), when Paul, one of the other spooks, dared me to turn into a bat again. Soon everyone was daring me – except for Lewis.

“I just don’t think you should,” he said anxiously.

“But why not?”

“Because Top Ghoul said it could be dangerous.”

I laughed loudly. “I’m sure she was just saying that to scare us,” I said.

“No, honestly, I’ve got a bad feeling about this,” said Lewis. “And you really

don't want to get into any trouble ... not when we might get a new mission."

A few spooks are sent to Earth to investigate mysteries and strange ghostly happenings. They are called the Spook Squad. And Lewis and I are members. Recently we had been sent on our first mission – to find out about the terrifying Mothman. No other spook could solve the case, but Lewis and I did. It had been pretty scary, but now we were bursting for another mission.

I hesitated for a moment.

But then I said, "Look, Lewis, I'm only going to shape-change into a bat for thirty seconds. Nothing can go wrong in such a short time, can it? Now everyone be quiet while I concentrate."

"Actually, you're the one doing all the talking," said Paul.

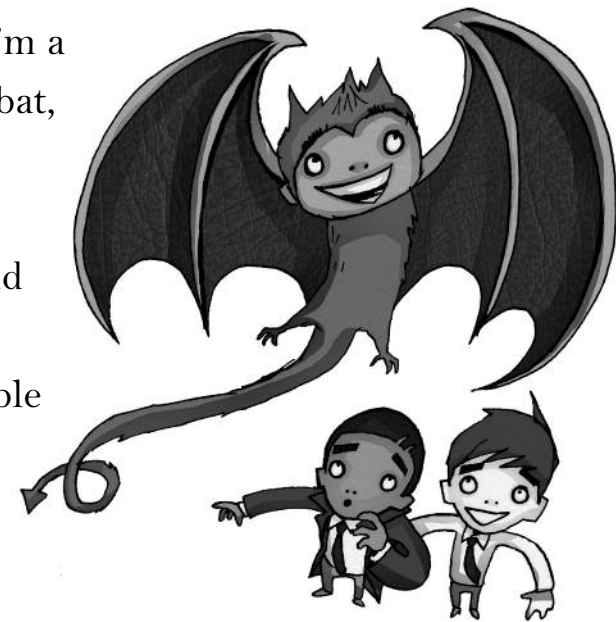
"So I am." I grinned.

I decided this time I'd be a huge bat with a massive tail. I closed my eyes, pictured the creature really clearly and yelled, "Shape-change."

The next moment I was flying around the dorm. Everyone let out a massive cheer.

"I bet I'm a dead cool bat, aren't I?"

I said, as I flapped and swirled at an incredible speed.



SPOOK SCHOOL

After I'd whizzed around the room about six times Lewis said, "Charlie, your time's up."

I'd been flying so fast I felt a bit dizzy so I was ready to stop. I cried, "Shape-change back." Only I didn't change. And instead, something terrible happened.

I kept on flying.

