SPIKEY

and the Mischief of Magpies



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Printed in the UK on paper from responsible sources.



This book is dedicated to all grandmothers who have a special place in children's hearts.

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Introduction

Hello all, I am Reginald. R-E-G-I-N-A-L-D! And I'm very, *very* important! But you can also call me Reggie, if you like. You see, Spikey, the little hedgehog, called me Reggie from the start, and he liked me just as I was back then when he found me in the long grass.

Throughout the book, the quiz questions on the left-hand pages are for younger readers to answer:

- ★ What type of creature is Reggie?
- ★ Look at the picture of Reggie. How would you describe him?
- ★ Where does Reggie live?

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Now, once again, my name is Reginald the robin, and I'm supposed to tell you about Spikey, the big-hearted hedgehog, but I obviously need to put first things first. So, as you might already know, some robins believe they are in charge of the world. All of it. And I'm the best of all robins!

It wasn't always like this, to be honest with you, thinking about it now. I met Spikey when he was also all alone, making his own way in the world. Our world is Regent's Park in London, which is huge for us animals, even though it's only small for you humans. It can be a dangerous place, and I needed help back then. Big time!

Spikey grew up with just Grandma Hedgehog. His left back leg is shorter and weaker than his others, so the other little hedgehogs didn't want to play with him. I really don't understand this because he's such a lovely hedgehog.

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And the questions on the right-hand pages are for older readers to answer, think about or discuss:

- How does Reggie describe Spikey?
- Are Spikey and Reggie friends? Why?
- What do you think it felt like for Reggie to be all alone? How would Spikey have felt?

Spikey is great fun to be with, and he has really good ideas too. He always tries to do his best and certainly never hurts anyone. Actually, he helps them, just like he helped me when I most needed it! He showed me how to fly, you see, so I could feel really proud of what I could do.

Grandma Hedgehog gave him some great advice, but I doubt she would have taught him to be helpful to others at all times, because it can also put

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★ What is Spikey like to be with?

★ When you look at the picture of Spikey, what can you see?

★ Do you know anyone a bit like Spikey?

him in danger! Luckily, these dangers have all been overcome, and Spikey now has so many friends. Along the way, we've found plenty to laugh about and met more animals to play with.

I miss Spikey when I'm not with him. He's one of a kind! I hope you will like him as much as I do, because he's very special, you know. Spikey is my friend – my best friend, in fact! Or should I say I am *his* best friend? It doesn't matter! Anyway, do you have this kind of friend? I really hope you do, because friends like this are for life and have a special place in your heart.

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- What two things about Spikey do you remember the most?
- How would Reggie describe a friend?
- How would you describe a friend?

Chapter One

"Hedgehogs don't need to get into trouble every day." This used to be Grandma Hedgehog's favourite saying, and it always made Spikey chuckle. He was thinking about it now as he went to have a drink from the pond just below the waterfall in Regent's Park. In his experience, trouble had usually brought some fun and friends as well – in his little hedgehog world anyway.

He bent down to have a sip of water and noticed that his face looked very different in the reflection. It didn't resemble him at all! His nose was suddenly short, he had no ears, and his eyes had become massive. It also looked as if he had lost all his hair and spikes! *"WAAAAAAAAA!"* shouted Spikey, falling backwards and rolling into a ball in horror. While

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★ What is Grandma Hedgehog's favourite saying?

★ Describe the picture on page 13.

★ How does Spikey describe his nose?

still lying on his back, he checked with his front paws that both ears were still there; that his nose was nicely long and pointy, as it should be; and that his eyes were also the usual size.



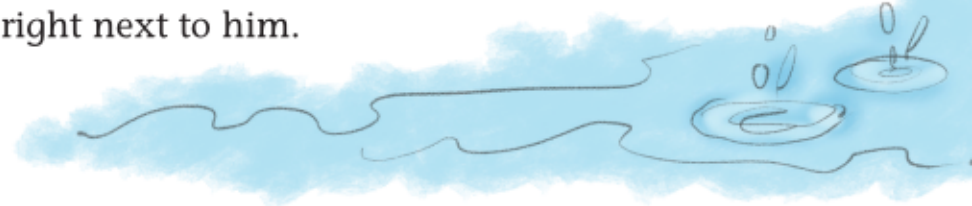
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- What was Spikey thinking about when he went to the pond?
- Have you ever got yourself into trouble? How did you feel?
- Why did Spikey fall backwards in horror?

He got up and wandered back to the pond where he had looked in the water. "*Nooo! How is this possible?*" Spikey said loudly in disbelief. He again saw this strange face right opposite him in the water. He touched his ears, and the face did the same. Then Spikey touched his nose, and the face in the water touched its nose too. Then he moved closer, and so did the strange face! Closer, and closer, and then, *SPLASH!*

"Oh no. Oh no! *Oh nooo!* I don't want to be in the water!" cried Spikey as he thrashed around, trying to keep his head above the surface. His shorter back leg wasn't making it easy for him. *At least it's just me and not that weird face*, he thought.

"Oh, hello there, *mon chéri,*" a deep voice suddenly said right next to him.



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★ What was the face in the water doing? Who do you think it was?

★ What do the words 'wandered', 'disbelief' and 'surface' mean?

★ What language is the deep voice next to Spikey speaking in? What does '*mon chéri*' mean? To find out, look in the dictionary at the back of this book.


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- What can you see in the picture on page 15?
- Does Spikey like water? Why do you think this?
- Why does Spikey think that the face is 'weird'? Do you agree with Spikey about this?

"*WAAAAAAAAA!*" Spikey was so startled that he froze. His little body went right under water and sank all the way down to the bottom.



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- ★ What happened to Spikey?
- ★ What can you see in the picture on pages 16 and 17?
- ★ What do the words 'beautiful', 'gasping' and 'gulping' mean?

When he opened his eyes, he was really surprised at how beautiful the world down here was and how many treasures he could see, but he had no time to look around. The next moment, he started gasping for air! Just when he thought all was lost, the strange face appeared next to him at the bottom of the pond and started pulling him back up towards the surface. The creature was quite big and, most of all, strong. As they moved upwards, Spikey realised all of a sudden that hedgehogs can actually swim! He used all four of his paws to paddle the rest of the way back up, not needing any more help. When his head was back out of the water, gulping to catch his breath, he saw the face was now right beside him.



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- How does Spikey describe the underwater world?
- Why is Spikey trying to get out of the pond? What is happening to him?
- Have you ever thought you couldn't do something and then realised you actually could? What was it?

"Hello there. I'm Spikey the hedgehog. Who are you?"

"I'm Ondine, and I'm a terrapin, *mon ami*," replied the creature.

"Terrapin? What's a terrapin? And what language is that?" asked Spikey. He had never met – or even heard of – a terrapin before. He could clearly see Ondine had a shell and could swim easily, but he had never come across this accent or language.

"Basically, I'm a *petite* turtle, a small one," she explained, "and I came from France when I was just a little *bébé*."

"All right, Ondine, that's good to know," said Spikey. "And have you always lived here in the pond?"

"No, not always, but I've been here for quite a while now."

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★ Who is Ondine?

★ How would you describe Ondine?

★ What unusual words does she use?

"And do you live in the water?"

"Mostly, yes, but I can also spend a bit of time on the shore if I want to, just for a change of scenery. In fact, 'Ondine' means 'little wave'."

That made total sense to Spikey. He couldn't imagine someone just swimming around all the time. *That would be too tiring, unless you're a natural athlete or a fish*, he thought.



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- Does Spikey understand the French language? Do you?
- What happened to Ondine?
- How do you think Ondine is feeling?


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"Hmm," Ondine went on, "so you're a hedgehog. I thought hedgehogs could swim at least half a mile and cross ponds, lakes and rivers."

- ★ What is happening in the picture? Why?
- ★ How does Spikey describe himself?
- ★ What do the words 'float' and 'lilo' mean?

"Yes, we can. In fact, I can run and climb and swim, but all this is slightly more difficult for me because my left back leg is shorter and weaker than the other one. So I'm very grateful that you helped me when I got into difficulty in the water, as I could have drowned, you see."

"Hmm, I think if you turned on your back right now, you could even float, *mon chéri*!"

"Really? Let me see…Oh. Ohhh! Look, I'm floating! This is so comfy. I wish you'd told me this before. Look, look, look!" Spikey was now drifting around his new friend with a huge smile spreading all over his face.

"That's because your spines are hollow and filled with air," Ondine explained. "Next time you get tired of swimming, you can turn onto your back and rest for a bit by floating. Basically, you have your own built-in lilo."

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- What does Ondine say hedgehogs can do?
- How does Ondine say hedgehogs can float? Did you know this?
- What do you think of hedgehogs now?



Ondine could see Spikey was getting tired now, so while he was still floating on his back, she pushed him gently towards the shoreline. They got out of the water, and Spikey shook himself dry. Ondine tried to do the same, but she fell over sideways and then onto her back! She didn't hurt herself, and they laughed until they cried. Then Spikey had to put his long nose underneath her so he could lift her carefully and straighten her up. They sat next to each other on the bank, drying off in the sunshine.

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★ What are Spikey and Ondine doing in the picture?

★ Are they having fun? How do you know?

★ How many noses does it look like Spikey has in the picture? Why?



"Thank you, Spikey," said Ondine. "I thought what you were doing was funny, so I wanted to do the same, but clearly, terrapins can't shake…oh, *mais non*! Anyway, *mon ami*, what have you been up to today, apart from getting yourself into trouble?"

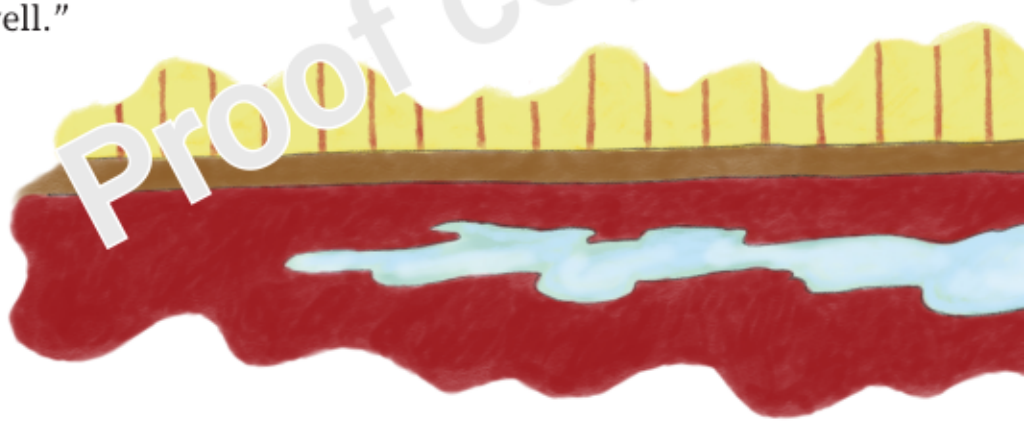
To Spikey, this sounded just like his beloved grandma! "This is the thing: you see, while getting myself into a pickle – I mean into a mess – I usually meet new friends, and we have some great adventures! Oh…er…actually, would you like to be my friend?"

- What do you think about Ondine?
- Why does Spikey think Ondine sounds like Grandma Hedgehog?
- Do you think Ondine would like to be Spikey's friend? Why?

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"I would really like that," Ondine answered. "I've felt like I've been on my own ever since I was brought over from France. I lived with Mr McDougall – the park ranger – for a long time, but he has a cat called Tiny. One day, she just came and opened the tank I was living in. Then she tried to chase me around and catch me! But when she realised the tank was full of water, she panicked and knocked the tank over, and it smashed on the floor. Cats hate water, don't they? So she just ran away. *Quelle catastrophe!* Typical. Oh well."

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★ Who is Tiny?

★ Does Tiny like water? Why?

★ Describe all the things in the picture.


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- Why does Ondine want to be Spikey's friend?
- What does the word 'panic' mean? Have you ever panicked? How does it feel when you panic?
- What is Tiny thinking in the picture? Would you like to be Tiny in this picture?

"Tiny? You mean Tiny, the caterpillar sausage cat? I know her. She totally hates water. I met her the other day…" Spikey stopped because he felt it was too much to explain to a new friend, but it all came flooding back into his mind. He remembered the events of that whole day not long ago, but he hadn't seen Tiny since then.

"You call her a caterpillar sausage cat? That's just like Tiny. *C'est trés bon!*" Ondine laughed out loud. "Yes, she does not always think of others either, because when she ran away, I was left in the cottage all on my own. Terrapins can't stay out of water for too long. I needed to find some water very quickly in order to survive! I looked all around, and because I couldn't find anything useful in the house, I had

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★ How does Spikey describe Tiny?

★ Do terrapins need water? Why?

★ How does Ondine feel about Tiny?

to wander outside into the wilderness. After a while, I found this beautiful pond with a waterfall and made it my new home, even though Tiny has tried to persuade me to come back."

"And you've never missed Mr McDougall and Tiny?" Spikey asked.

"I did – and I do – but I'm still angry with Tiny. She caused all this! I really miss Mr McDougall and the delicious food he used to give me all the time. I can hunt here in the pond and feed myself, but it's not the same. I'm also very *solitaire* – how do you say it? – lonely."

"I'm lonely too when my other friends aren't around. But you look like fun. Will you teach me some more tricks to do in the water?"

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- What does Ondine think of Tiny?
- Do you agree with Ondine?
- What does *'solitaire'* mean? Have you ever been *'solitaire'*?



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Ondine jumped into the water again, swam away and brought back a big piece of bark for Spikey to sit on.

"This looks cool," replied Spikey with a chuckle.

He hopped onto the bark and let Ondine push him around the pond and underneath the waterfall.

- ★ What is happening in the picture?
- ★ What does the word 'chuckle' mean?
- ★ How do you think Spikey and Ondine are feeling in this picture?


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He got a bit wet, but he didn't mind. He loved having a new friend, but at the same time, he was wondering how he and his other friends could get Ondine safely back home when the time came.

- Do you like making new friends? How do you make new friends? Why is it good to have them?
- What will happen if Spikey falls into the water?
- What was Spikey wondering? What do you think?