

CHAPTER ONE

Noisy! Man, was it noisy. How could a few little kids make such a huge amount of noise? Charles almost wanted to put his hands over his ears. Penny's Place, his little brother's day care, was not always so loud. Sometimes when Charles and his mom came to pick up his brother, it was pretty quiet. Kids would be napping, or sitting in a circle listening to Miss Penny read a book, or drawing with crayons at the big art table.

Not today. Today there were three little girls in the dress-up corner, squabbling over a red cape. In another corner, two boys yelled as they banged



blocks together. A tiny girl in a purple striped sweater lay on a couch, kicking her legs and crying loudly as one of the teachers tried to comfort her, and a parade of older kids marched through the playroom tootling on horns, crashing cymbals together, and banging on drums and tambourines.

Then Charles heard something else. Even over all that noise, he thought he recognized his own brother's special yell. He cocked his head to hear better. Then he was sure. "That's the Bean," he said. "Where is he?"

"I think Adam is in the kitchen with Miss Penny." The teacher who was helping the little girl barely looked up as she answered.

Adam. That sounded so strange. At home, he was always just the Bean. But Charles thought maybe it was a good idea for his brother to start



getting used to his real name before he went to kindergarten. “He doesn’t sound happy,” Charles said. He ran toward the sound of the Bean’s wail, and found him in the kitchen.

The Bean stood below a high counter, fists clenched and face bright red, screaming, “Up! I want to be up!”

On top of the counter sat a boy named Daniel. Charles knew it was Daniel, because he was wearing a Spider-Man shirt. Daniel *always* wore a Spider-Man shirt. In fact, he was known as “Spidey” at Miss Penny’s. And not just because of the shirt. According to Miss Penny, Daniel really was just like Spider-Man. He could climb anything. He seemed to see the whole world as a giant jungle gym. If you took your eyes off him for one second, you could be sure that he would scramble up, up, and away.