



Mr Birdsnest and the House Next Door

Julia Donaldson





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This book has dyslexia-friendly features

*To everyone at
Miltonbank Primary School*

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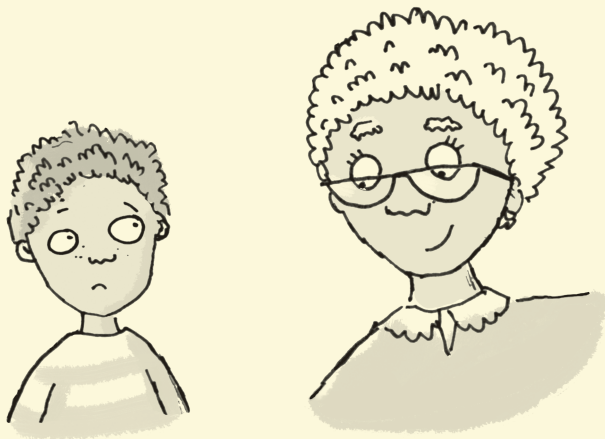
Chapter 1

Mr
Crocodile



When Dad told us Granny was going to come and live with us, my little brother Elmo said, “There’s no room. Is she going to sleep in the bath?”

“No, she’ll need her own bedroom,”
said Dad. “We’re going to have to look
for a new house.”



Granny couldn't live on her own any more because she kept getting into muddles. She had a black cat called Panther, and sometimes she put dry cat food instead of cat litter into the tray where he did his poos.



Panther didn't mind – he just ate the food. But he did mind the day Granny put cat litter in his bowl instead of cat food.

Mum and Dad were worried that Granny might feed herself the wrong things, or leave the oven on, or forget to turn the tap off.

We went to look at a lot of houses. The man who showed us the houses was called Mr Mills, but Elmo called him Mr Crocodile. When I asked why he said it was “because of his big false toothy smile”.



“Do you mean he has false teeth or a false smile?” I asked.

“Both,” Elmo said.

Most of the houses we looked at had something wrong with them. But Mr Crocodile just smiled and said they were “charming”.

Then one day Mr Crocodile took us to see an empty house. The path up to the door had thick bushes growing over it. Butterflies were fluttering about.

“This will be charming once the garden’s all cut back,” said Mr Crocodile. But Elmo and I liked it the way it was.



The front door of the house had a lovely knocker in the shape of a lion's head.



Inside it was all empty and bare,
and there were a lot of cobwebs. Mum
and Dad walked around slowly with Mr
Crocodile but Elmo and I raced about.
We ran up the clattery stairs, and
looked in all the rooms and cupboards.

One of the bedrooms had wallpaper
with jungle plants and monkeys on it.
There was a big cupboard, the kind
you can walk right into.

Inside the cupboard there was an enormous spider's web with a big fat spider sitting on it.





“Maybe it’s a bird-eating spider,”
said Elmo.

When Mr Crocodile and Mum and
Dad came upstairs, Elmo and I raced
up to them.

“We’ve got to buy this house!” I
said.

“It’s got butterflies and a lion and monkeys and a bird-eating spider,” said Elmo. “It’s a jungle house!”

Mum and Dad didn’t look too sure, even when Elmo said he’d give them some of his pocket money to help pay for it. They said the bedroom downstairs was too small and dark for Granny.





“Mr Mills says the house next door is for sale too,” said Mum. “Let’s go and have a look at that.”

The lady who lived in the house next door didn’t look very happy when she saw Elmo and me. She made us take our shoes off before she let us in.

We followed the grown-ups round all the boring rooms. Most of them had wallpaper with flowers on. There was a smell like flowers too. I think it was all the polish the lady put on her tables and chairs.

When we left, Elmo said, "That was a horrible flowerpot house! We can't move there! If we do, I'll run away."



But Mum and Dad liked it.

“That sunny bedroom would be just right for Granny,” Dad said.

In the end we did move to the flowerpot house. Mum, Dad and Granny liked it, but it didn't feel like home to Elmo and me. Elmo hated the flowers on the wallpaper in his room.



He made up a song:



“Roses are red, violets are blue,
Flush the lot of them down the loo.”

After three days of that, Dad told
Elmo to get lost.

“All right,” said Elmo, “I will.”

And the next thing we knew, he
was gone.