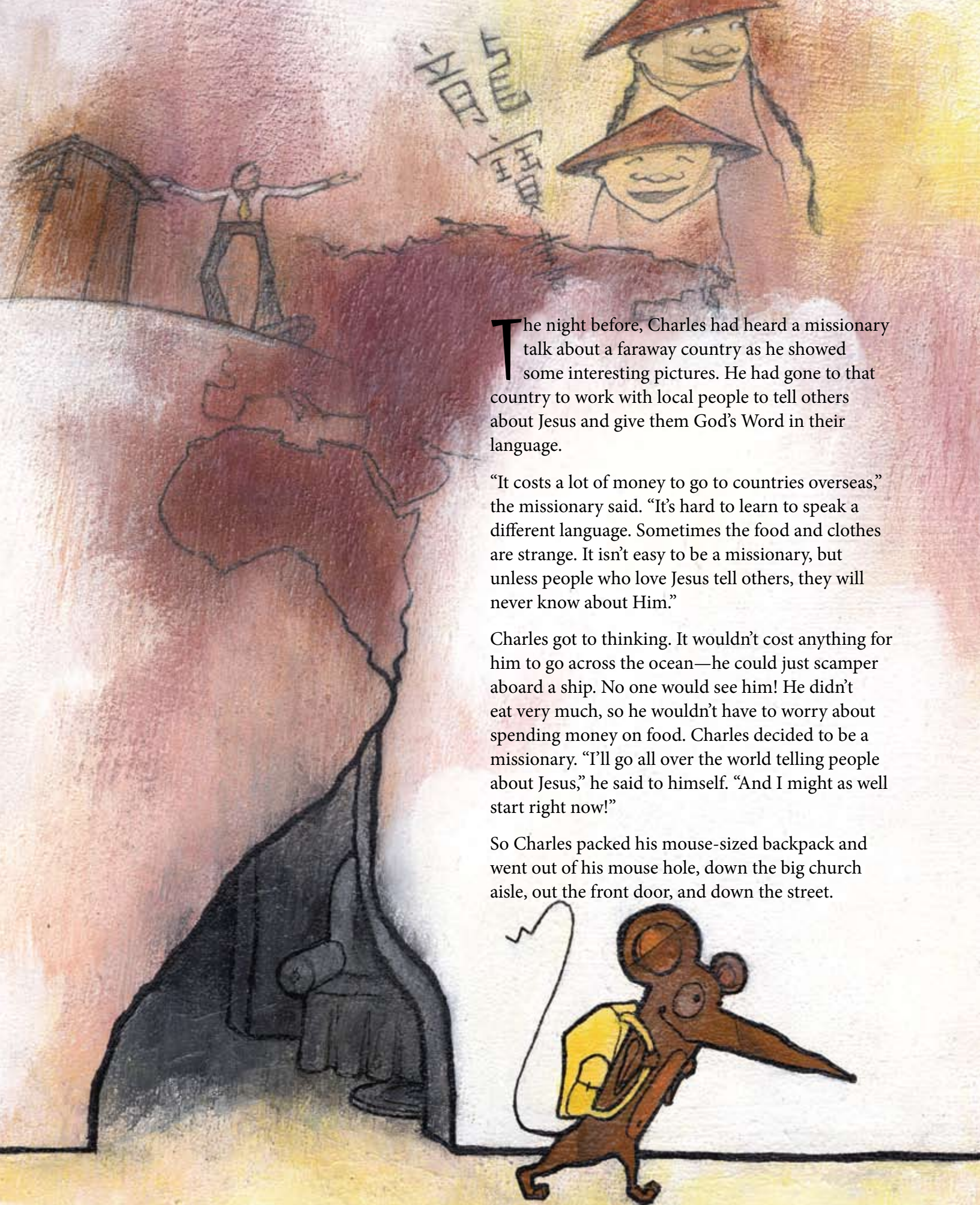


Charles — THE MISSIONARY MOUSE



Charles was a mouse who lived in a church.
One Monday morning, he sat in his mouse
hole and stared out into the empty church.



The night before, Charles had heard a missionary talk about a faraway country as he showed some interesting pictures. He had gone to that country to work with local people to tell others about Jesus and give them God's Word in their language.

"It costs a lot of money to go to countries overseas," the missionary said. "It's hard to learn to speak a different language. Sometimes the food and clothes are strange. It isn't easy to be a missionary, but unless people who love Jesus tell others, they will never know about Him."

Charles got to thinking. It wouldn't cost anything for him to go across the ocean—he could just scamper aboard a ship. No one would see him! He didn't eat very much, so he wouldn't have to worry about spending money on food. Charles decided to be a missionary. "I'll go all over the world telling people about Jesus," he said to himself. "And I might as well start right now!"

So Charles packed his mouse-sized backpack and went out of his mouse hole, down the big church aisle, out the front door, and down the street.



Charles decided that maybe he should practise telling people about Jesus before he got on a ship. When he came to a house, he climbed onto a windowsill and peeked in. Yes, someone was home, so he slipped in under the door. “Good morning,” he said, with a big smile. “I’ve come to tell you—” But he didn’t get to say any more.

“Mice! We’ve got mice in the house,” the woman in the kitchen screamed. “Quick!” the woman yelled at her husband. “Help me find the mousetraps.” The woman grabbed a broom and swung it at Charles.

He ducked out of the way just in time, and squeezed under the door to get outside again.

Charles decided that he had better get away as fast as he could. He scurried down the street. He was sad because he didn’t get to tell the people in the house about Jesus. But as he walked along, he began to cheer up. “Maybe people in foreign countries aren’t afraid of mice,” he thought.



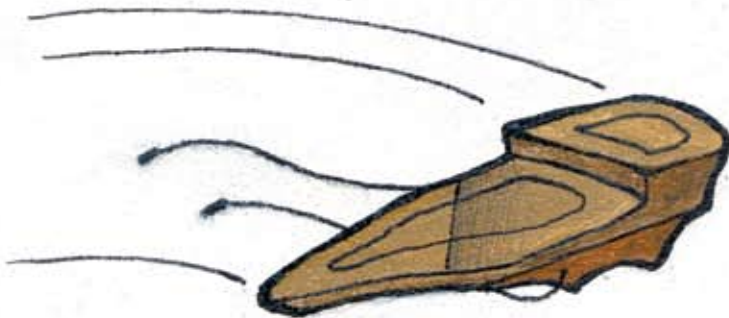


At last, Charles came to the dock by the ocean. There he saw big ships loaded with cargo and passengers, ready to sail away. “I’m just in time,” Charles said to himself.

He ran up the gangplank and onto the first big ship. Since he didn’t want to be cheating anyone by sneaking on the ship, he decided to at least tell the captain that he was on board.

Charles found the captain’s cabin and slipped under the door. “Pardon me,” he said, in a friendly voice. “I just came to—”

But Charles never finished, because the captain threw a shoe at him. “Pesky mice,” the captain yelled. “Steward! Get me a mousetrap before my ship is filled with mice!” Charles got away just in time. The steward almost stepped on his tail! Charles carefully looked around the ship until he discovered the kitchen. “This looks like just the place for me,” he said.



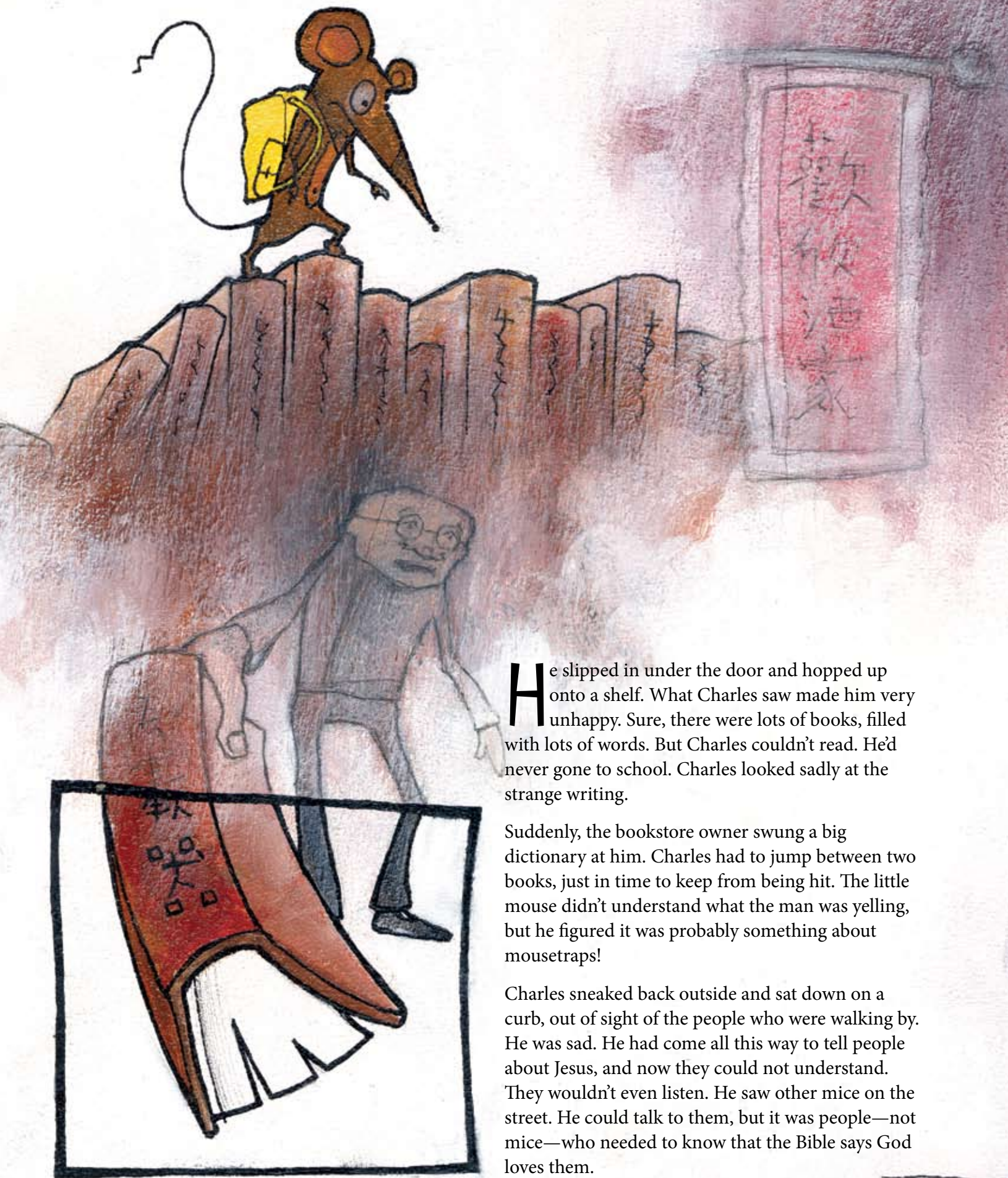
Charles settled down in a corner behind barrels of flour. He kept a close watch on the scraps of food the cook threw away, so he had plenty to eat. And he decided he better not be seen again until the ship got to land.

After many long days and nights, the ship slowed down and then stopped. Charles was so excited, he nearly forgot to stay out of sight. The people getting off the ship almost trampled him. At last his tiny feet were on dry ground again! He ran off to tell this new land about Jesus and the Bible.

The city was very different from the little town he came from in North America. And the people were different too. They looked like people in the missionary’s pictures he saw back home. But Charles couldn’t understand what they were saying. He decided that if he was going to tell them about Jesus, he would have to learn their language.

“People learn things from books,” Charles said to himself. “Maybe I can too!” He ran down the street until he came to a bookstore.





He slipped in under the door and hopped up onto a shelf. What Charles saw made him very unhappy. Sure, there were lots of books, filled with lots of words. But Charles couldn't read. He'd never gone to school. Charles looked sadly at the strange writing.

Suddenly, the bookstore owner swung a big dictionary at him. Charles had to jump between two books, just in time to keep from being hit. The little mouse didn't understand what the man was yelling, but he figured it was probably something about mousetraps!

Charles sneaked back outside and sat down on a curb, out of sight of the people who were walking by. He was sad. He had come all this way to tell people about Jesus, and now they could not understand. They wouldn't even listen. He saw other mice on the street. He could talk to them, but it was people—not mice—who needed to know that the Bible says God loves them.



Charles saw the people talking to each other—and then he understood! “Only *people* can talk to people,” he said to himself. “So only people can be missionaries. Nobody would listen to a mouse, even if he could speak the language.”

He scampered off down the street and found the big ship at the dock again, ready to leave for home. He scurried on board and went straight to the kitchen. Once again, he travelled for many long days and nights over the ocean. When the ship docked at his little town, Charles went straight to the church and into his mouse hole.





Charles was so happy to be back. “This is where I belong,” he thought. How he wished he could tell all the boys and girls and mothers and fathers what he had learned. “YOU have to be missionaries,” he wanted to say to them.

But, of course, people don’t listen to mice —or do they?