

Charlie's Story

Charlie, a 12-year-old child from Scotland, wakes up one morning and checks the time on their smart phone. Time to get up. Charlie groans and rolls out of bed, sleepily pulls on their school uniform, and trudges downstairs. "Good morning!" calls Charlie's mum from the kitchen, "better take your raincoat today, the weather is meant to be awful". Charlie does a weird little combination of a yawn and a sigh at the same time, and to hide their embarrassment at the strange noise that comes out, says "Alexa, play some rock tunes." Bobbing their head to the music coming out of the speaker, Charlie chews thoughtfully on a piece of toast and thinks about the day ahead. Walking to school half an hour later, Charlie quickly holds their phone in front of their face, opens up their texting app and messages their friend Sam.

08:37 Meet you at the ~~corner~~ company?
08:38 *the corner

Sam 08:37 ???

Sam 08:38 Yeah, nearly there!

A couple of minutes later the two friends are walking side by side. Charlie tells Sam they found a new YouTube channel all about their favourite computer game. They just came upon it while watching their favourite videos. "Sounds funny," says Sam, so Charlie pulls out their phone to send Sam the link. "Watch out!" Sam yells, as Charlie, so busy on their phone, almost walks into a dustbin! The pair laugh together as they arrive at the school gates. In class, Charlie's teacher Mrs. Mills opens Google to find the class's daily word game. She types in 'Wo...' and 'Wordle' appears as a suggestion, she presses enter and navigates to the site. Charlie finds the word game difficult, but their classmate Sandy always helps them out.

After lessons, the class all get time to play Maths games on their school laptops. A new set of games pops up for Charlie, they seem harder than last week. Charlie peeps over Sandy's shoulder; theirs look different and Charlie wonders if they're as hard. "Your questions are different to mine! I thought we were on the same level for Maths." "That's what I thought too!" Sam replies. Charlie feels a bit upset. They always thought they were as good as Sandy at Maths but the computer seemed to think Sandy was better.

After school, Charlie gets home, grabs a snack, turns on the TV; time to relax. They hear their mum get home and remember - swimming lessons! Charlie rushes upstairs, grabbing their towel and stuffing it into their bag.

Charlie zones out in the car and looks through their notifications. In one of their apps, they scroll down and see a targeted ad for a new game that looks a bit like the one they love to play. Charlie thinks back to the YouTube videos they were talking about with Sam earlier and wonders whether there's a connection...

Charlie's thoughts are interrupted suddenly by their mum, "Oh no! The traffic is awful". Stuck in the traffic jam, she reaches for the car dashboard and opens the Maps app on her phone. "New route found, turn left onto Underwood Street" the voice from the phone says. Charlie's Mum sighs in relief as the app predicts they will arrive at swimming on time.

That evening, Charlie feels exhausted after a long day and watches their brother flick through the recommended options on Netflix, "I can't decide what to watch" he says. Charlie can feel their eyelids closing, and their mum notices too.

"A hot chocolate and then bed?" she asks.

"Yes please!" Charlie smiles, sleepily.