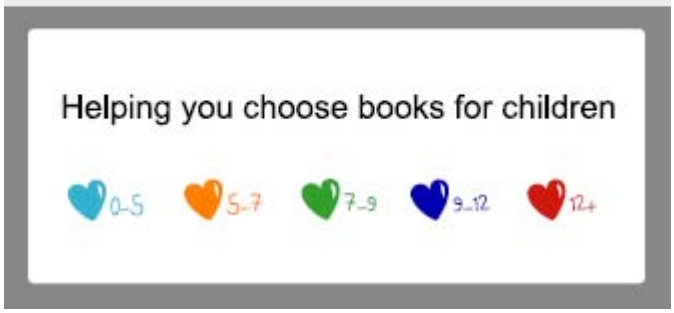
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The Littlest Pirate and the Hammerheads

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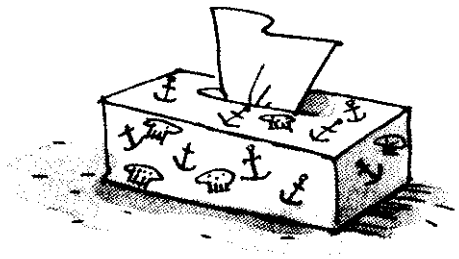
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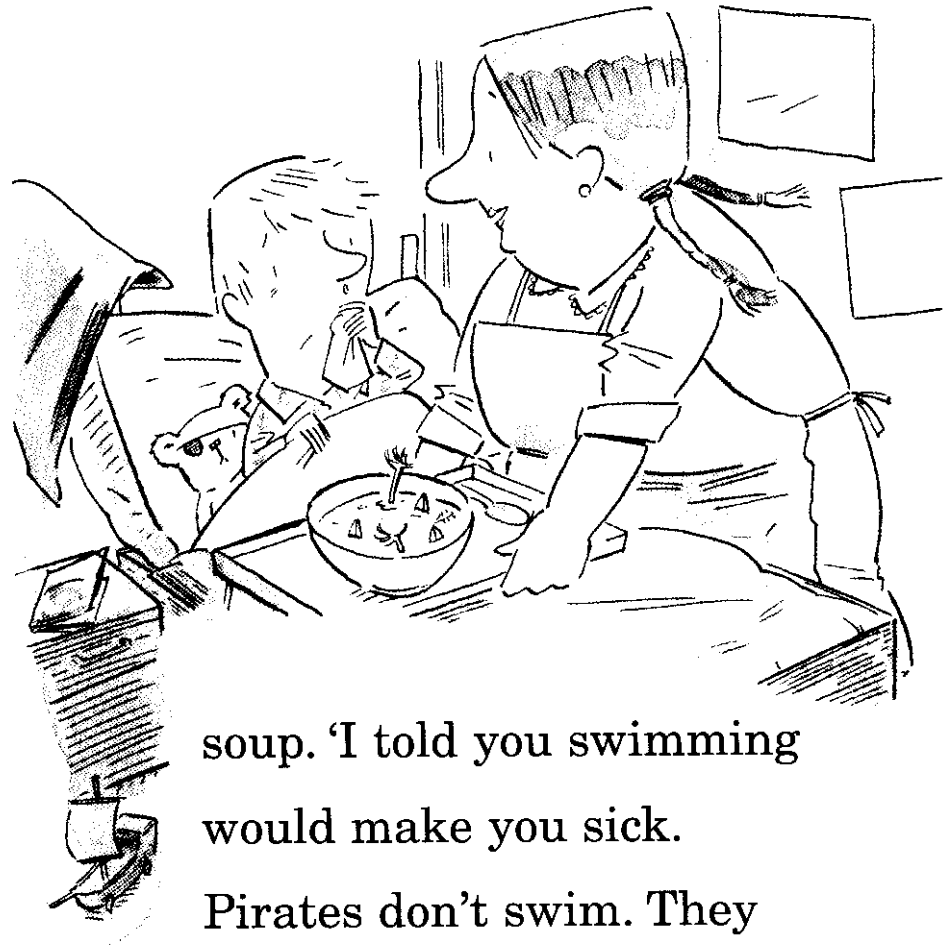
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Chapter One

'Achooo! Achooo!' Nicholas Nosh, the littlest pirate in the world, blew his nose and sniffed.

Gretta, chief cook and Nicholas's first mate, put down a bowl of chicken

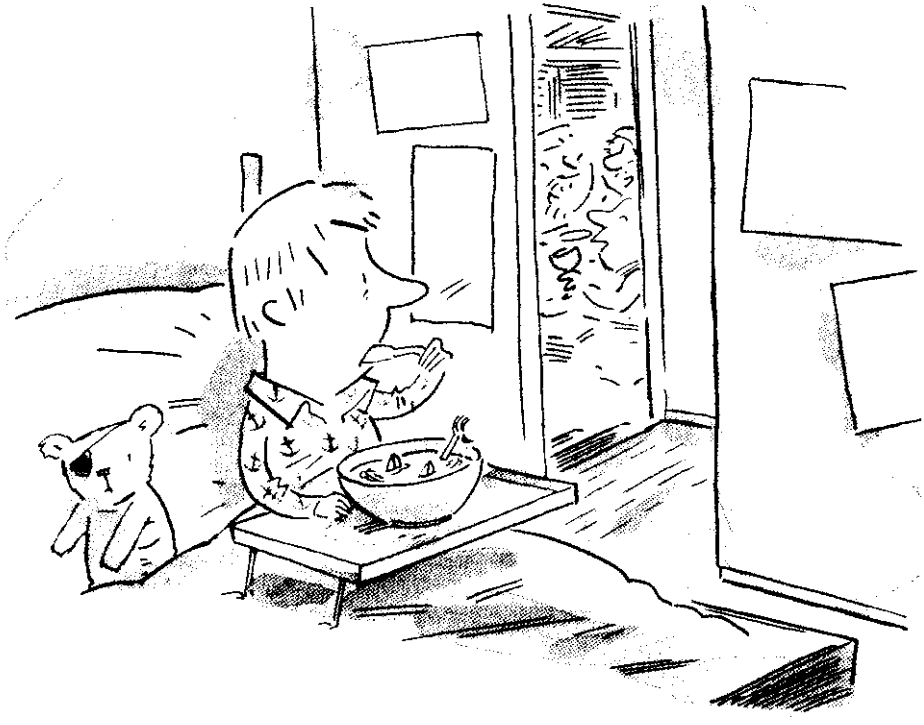


soup. 'I told you swimming would make you sick. Pirates don't swim. They sail ships on *top* of the water.'

Nicholas sniffed again and grinned. 'You could just call me Nicholas Fish.'

'Hmmph!' Gretta stood up. 'I'd better get back to the kitchen. Your brother's birthday party is giving me a big headache.' Gretta had been cooking for the party for days – chocolate cakes, lemon tarts and a special chicken dish with olives and onions. Nicholas was

sorry to be missing out on the feast, but he felt awful. And he was totally, utterly sick of chicken soup!

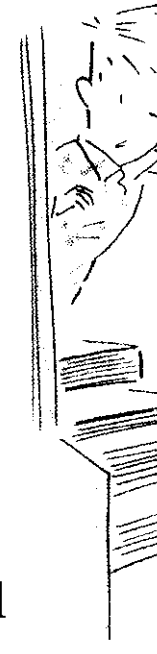


After Gretta left, he listened to the far-off sounds of people laughing and music playing. But it wasn't long before all was quiet again.

'Hmm,' said Nicholas. 'The party has ended early. I wonder why.' Then he fell asleep.

In the morning, all he could hear was lots of strange groaning.

He got out of bed, feeling much better, and went to investigate.



'Great gobstoppers!' Nicholas said in amazement. Pirates lay in the corridors, moaning and holding their stomachs. More pirates sprawled across the tables in the banquet hall. In their bedroom, Nicholas's mum and dad huddled under





their blankets, looking very ill.

'Have you all caught my cold?' Nicholas asked.

'No,' groaned his dad.

'It's Gretta's cooking. She's banned from the kitchen forever! Ooohhhh, I'm going to be sick again.'



Nicholas raced down to the kitchen. Something funny was going on. Gretta often had disasters with her cooking, but she'd never, ever made anyone ill.

In the kitchen, Gretta sat at the table, head in hands, crying.

'Gretta? What happened?' Nicholas asked.

'They all think I poisoned

them!' Gretta said miserably. 'It wasn't me, I know it wasn't. There was nothing wrong with my chicken.'

'Ooohh, what chicken?' moaned a maid who sat in the corner slumped over a large bowl. 'I thought you cooked beef curry. That's what we all ate.'

'I never made curry. I hate curry!' said Gretta.





Nicholas looked around the kitchen, then checked outside the back door. A large black pot with a few green mushrooms sat by

the rubbish bin. 'Aha!' he said. 'Where did this come from?' He scrubbed the side of the pot and found a strange mark stamped in the metal.

