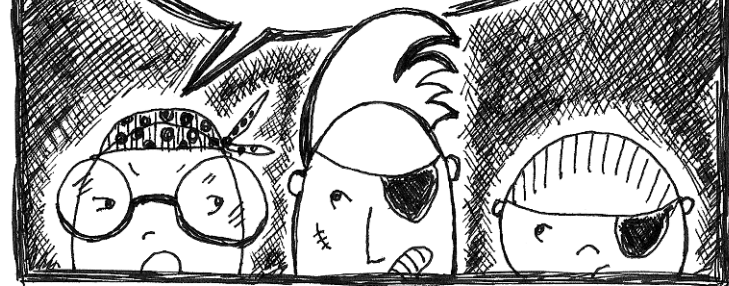


CHAPTER ONE

PIRATES OF
THE TANG SEA!





This morning I woke up early, my pillow wet with sweat. Finally! The first really hot day of the summer holidays. Up until now our break was turning out to be a real snore-fest. Rainy weather had kept me indoors for two weeks. I was busting to get outside, and my friends Marty, Johnno and Tubs felt the same way.

Marty invited all of us over to go swimming in his pool. Yep, a pool in his own backyard. How awesome is that?



AR-HAR, ME HEARTIES!



I couldn't wait. The closest I had to a pool at home was . . . well, the bathtub.



Mum dropped me off at Marty's house. I leaped out of the car and sprinted up to Marty's front door. It was only then that I heard Mum calling. 'Ben! You forget something?'

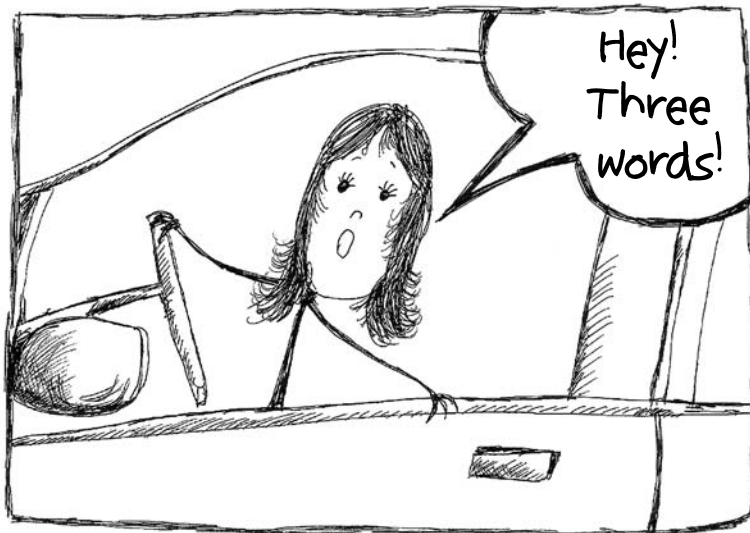
'Oh, yeah,' I said, turning back.

Mum and I always play this word game. We've done it since I was old enough to





read. I don't know why we do it, it's just something we do. Anyway, she calls out 'three words' and then I have to answer by saying three words that describe what I'm thinking at that very moment, as quick as I can. I know it sounds kind of nerdy, but secretly I like it.



'Three words!' Mum shouted through the open car window. This was easy.

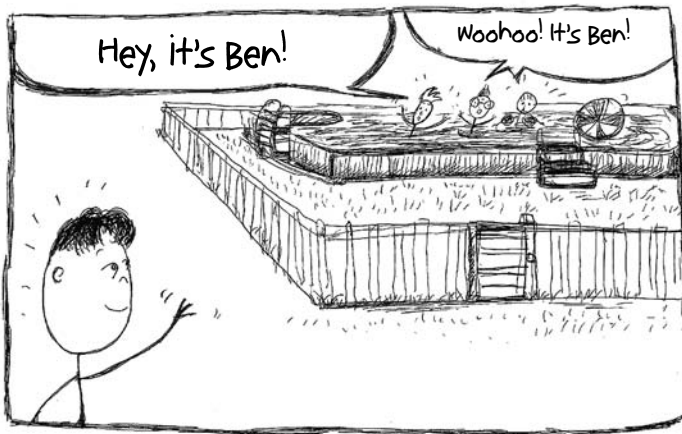


'Where's . . . the . . . pool!'
 'Okay, I'll give you that one,' Mum answered back. 'Have fun!'
 'Yeah, for sure!'
 Huh! Another three words! I wasn't even trying. I turned around and knocked on the front door.
 'Hi, Ben!'
 It was Marty's mum, Mrs Tang.



'Come in,' she said, smiling. 'The others are already here.'
 Marty's mum led me through the house and the sliding doors to the backyard.





There were Marty, Tubs and Johnno all splashing and wrestling one another in the pool.

'Marty, Ben's here!' Mrs Tang shouted.

'Hey, Benny!'

'Woohoo! Ben's here!'

My friends were excited to see me.

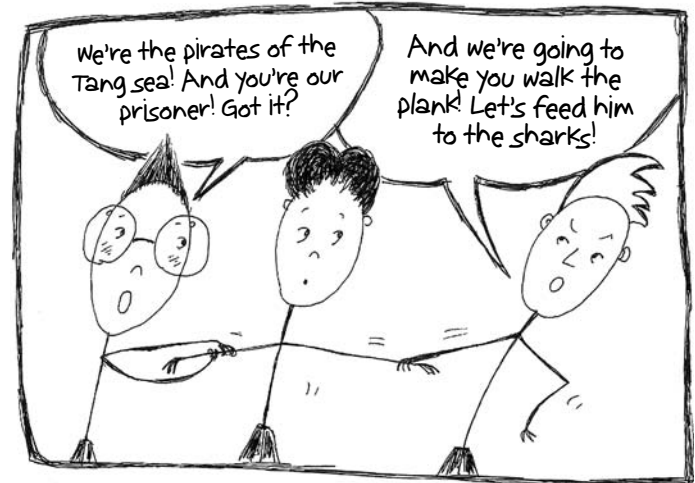
'Come on!' yelled Marty, hopping out of the pool and running towards me. Johnno and Tubs followed. As soon as Marty grabbed hold of my arm, I knew something was up.

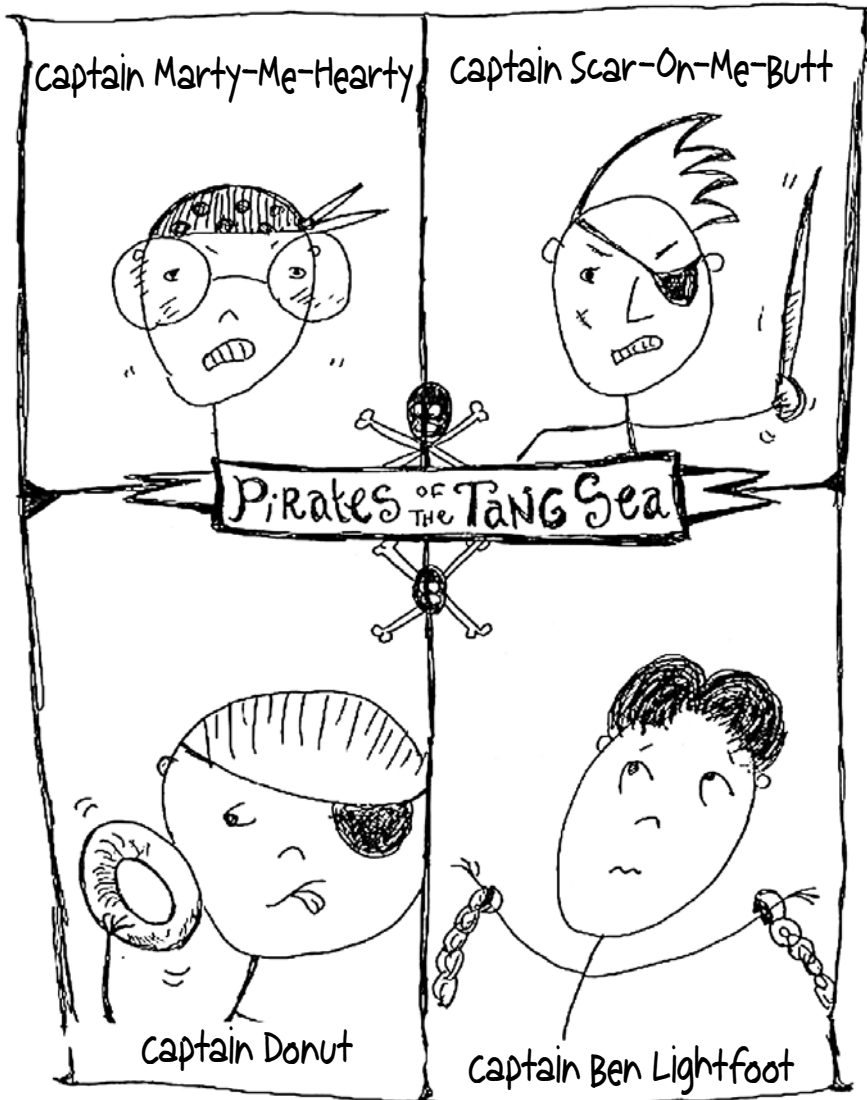


'I've got him!' he shouted.

'Got me?' I gulped.

Johnno quickly took hold of my other arm. And Tubs stood in front of us as if he were in charge or something.





'What's going on?' I asked as they dragged me toward the pool.

'We're gonna make you walk the plank!' said Johnno, grinning.

'The plank?'

'Yes, you're our prisoner now,' added Marty, 'and we're the Pirates of the Tang Sea!'

'Pirates? Of the Tang Sea?' I repeated, digging my feet into the grass.

'Come on, Ben,' Tubs whispered to the side. 'Play along. We're pirates. And the pool is the Tang Sea.'

'Oh, okay, I get it,' I said.

'Yeah, we don't want no funny business from ye!' coughed Johnno. 'I'm Captain Scar-On-Me-Butt and these are me loyal crew, Captain Marty-Me-Hearty and . . .'

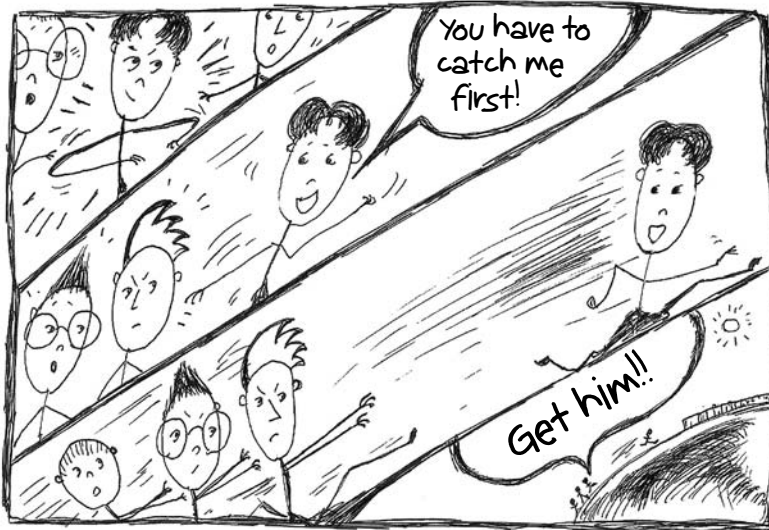
'I'm Captain Donut!' Tubs piped in excitedly.





‘So, you’re all captains. Okay, well, shiver me timbers, you scurvy dogs of the Tang Sea.’ I know that sounded pretty lame. But I was trying my best to get into it.

‘I didn’t expect to be caught so quickly,’ I added. ‘They don’t call me Captain Ben Lightfoot for nothing, you know!’



Johnno and Marty were taken by surprise as I pulled my arms free from

their tight grip and bolted away from them as fast as I could.

‘Get him!’ yelled Johnno, I mean, Captain Scar-On-Me-Butt.

I ran for my life. The Pirates of the Tang Sea were after me!

