



Things were not going too well for Button the ship's boy. He was trapped in sticky webbing, unable to move, and six hungry eyes, eight spindly legs and a mouth full of spiky fangs were heading in his direction. Mr Dregby, the house spider, had finally caught the young Pocket Pirate in his trap and it was time for dinner.



Mr Dregby slowly lowered himself towards Button, dangling from his spider silk. He stretched out four of his eight legs, reaching for the little pirate.

Button wriggled as hard as he could, desperately trying to free himself, and then—

THUMP!

He fell out of his hammock and woke up.

“Sufferin’ lobster lumps,” he gasped, rubbing his eyes and getting to his feet. “That was a *horrible* dream.”

Button decided it would be a sensible idea to climb out of the ship in a bottle and take a good look around the shelf. He needed to be sure Mr Dregby



was safely tucked away in his corner,
and not on the look-out for a Pocket
Pirate-sized snack.

As he slipped out through the neck of the bottle and down to the wooden shelf, he was met with a lovely surprise. The sun was shining in through the window of the old junk shop. It was a beautiful day, and perfect for exploring.

There was a loud rumbling sound.

Button looked down. “Oh dear, it’s my stomach again,” he groaned.

Supplies were low at the moment. The poor pirate crew had barely eaten for days. They were getting by on stale breadcrumbs and a piece of mouldy old cheese left over from their last adventure. And that wasn’t really enough to fill the tummies of four pirates and one ship’s cat. Old Uncle

Noggin and Captain Crabsticks were big eaters, and the youngest member of the crew, Lily, could pack away the grub too. Button had even tried chewing on the leaves of a potplant, but that had left him with a terrible tummyache.

The problem had started when the owner of the junk shop, Mr Tooley, had moved Doyle's basket under the Pocket Pirates' shelf. The shipmates needed to find a different way down to floor level that avoided the sly, slobbery dog.

The only thing Doyle was good for was keeping the evil skirting-board mice at bay. Who knows what might happen if the mice got hold of the pirates? And they often tried! But the Pocket Pirates



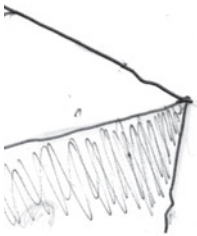
had to leave the shelf soon, or they would starve.

Button was still pondering when Lily appeared. She gave him a stern look. She could always tell when he was plotting something.

“I fancy some fresh air,” Button announced.

“Pardon?” Lily said. “I don’t think that’s a good idea ... Remember what happened last time you went off on your own? Your coat got caught on that picture hook and you were nearly Mr Dregby’s dinner!”

Button wasn’t put off. “Maybe you should come with me?” he suggested. “We could go hunting outside for





breakfast and be back before the Captain and Old Uncle Noggin are awake.”

Lily folded her arms and gave Button an even sterner look. “Out into the street? Are you mad? We can’t even get down from the shelf now Doyle has moved!”

“But there must be another way down, and we’re soooooo *hungry*,” Button said, rubbing his tummy. “You never know what we might find out there. Once, when Uncle Noggin was younger, he found a lump of fish and three chips inside an old newspaper.”


Lily made a “hmpf” sound and rolled her eyes.



“Did you hear me, Lily?” Button said. “FISH ... AND ... CHIPS!”

“Yes, I heard you!” said Lily. “We’ve had that story a million times. Even more than all his other tales. But what happened next, Button? He was attacked by a pigeon! Carried away and left up a tree. He’s still got the scars to prove it. You know I like adventure as much as the next pirate, but it’s too dangerous out there!”





Button gave Lily a solemn look.
“OK, you’re right,” he said. “It *is* too dangerous. I promise I won’t leave the shelf.”

But Lily couldn’t see that Button was crossing his fingers behind his back.

