

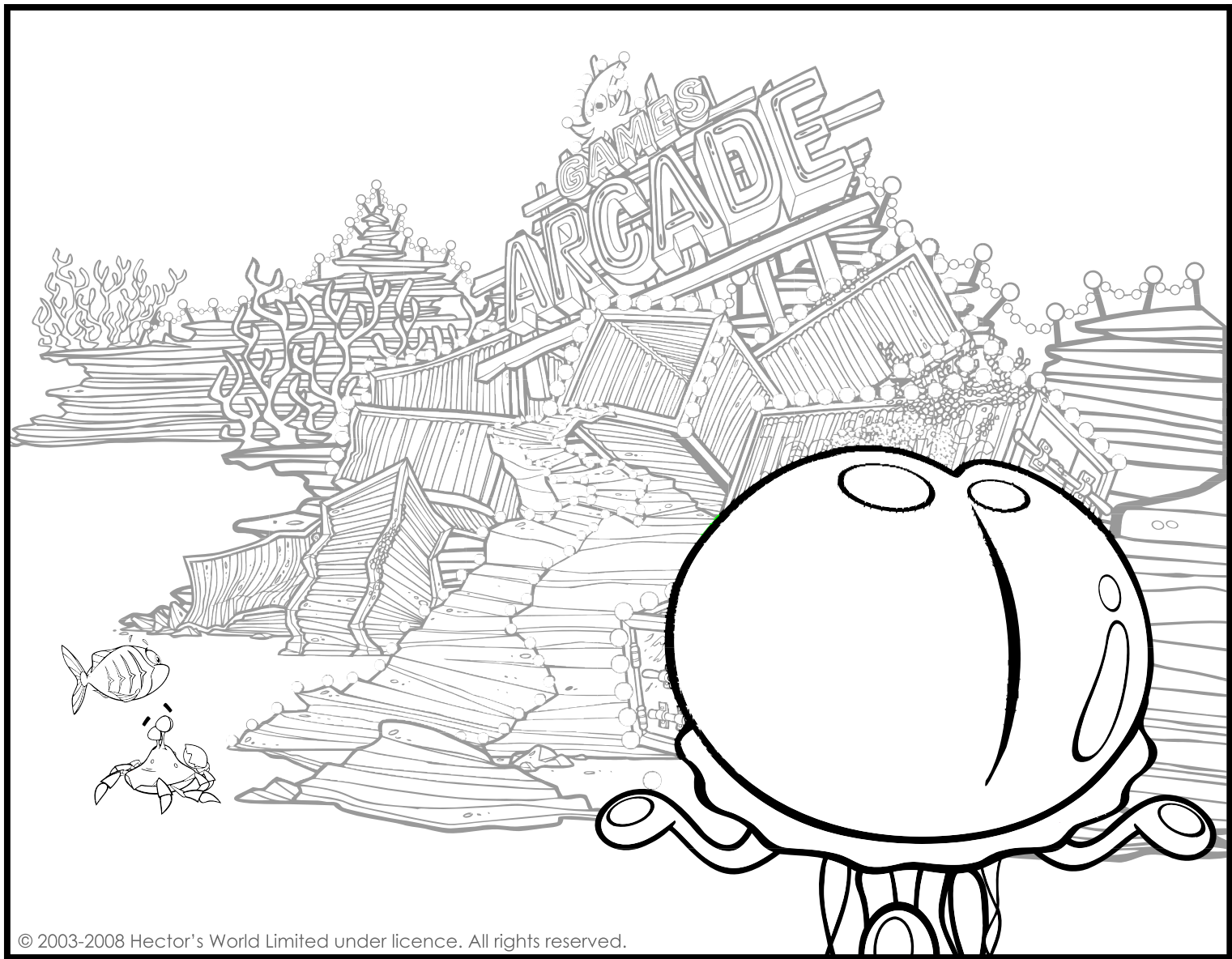
Your Personal Information Online
Episode 3

It's a Serious Game

featuring
Hector Protector® and his friends



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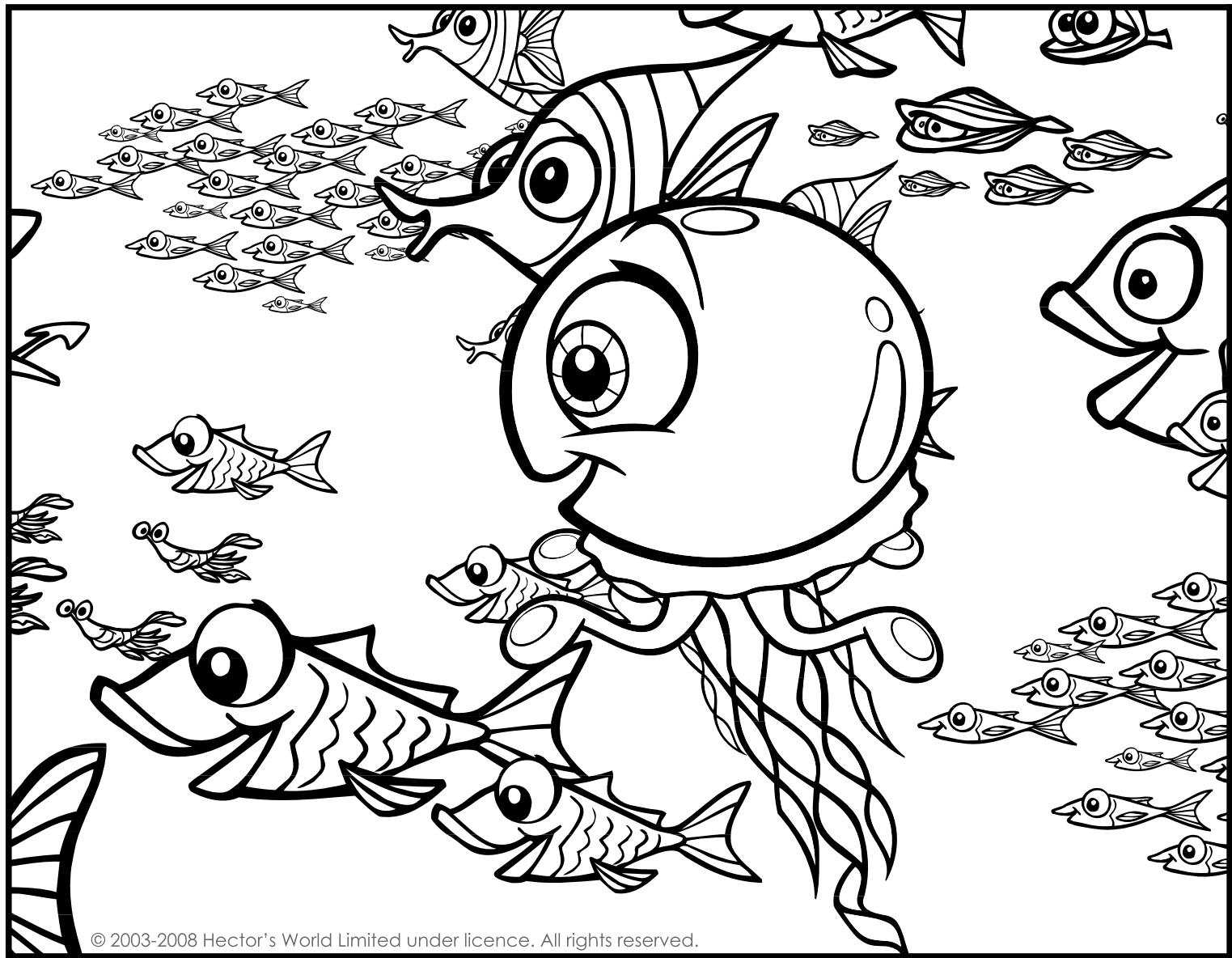
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It was near midday in the underwater settlement of Silicon Deep and the travelling carnival was crowded with visitors from across the ocean.

Hector and his friends had been having a great time. Ranjeet and Sprat were still off exploring. Hector, Ming and Tama checked in with Miss Finney - their supervising youth group leader – back at the main entrance.

“Thanks for checking in, and I’ll be here if you need me,” called Miss Finney, as the trio headed back into the bustling carnival to find Ranjeet and Sprat.

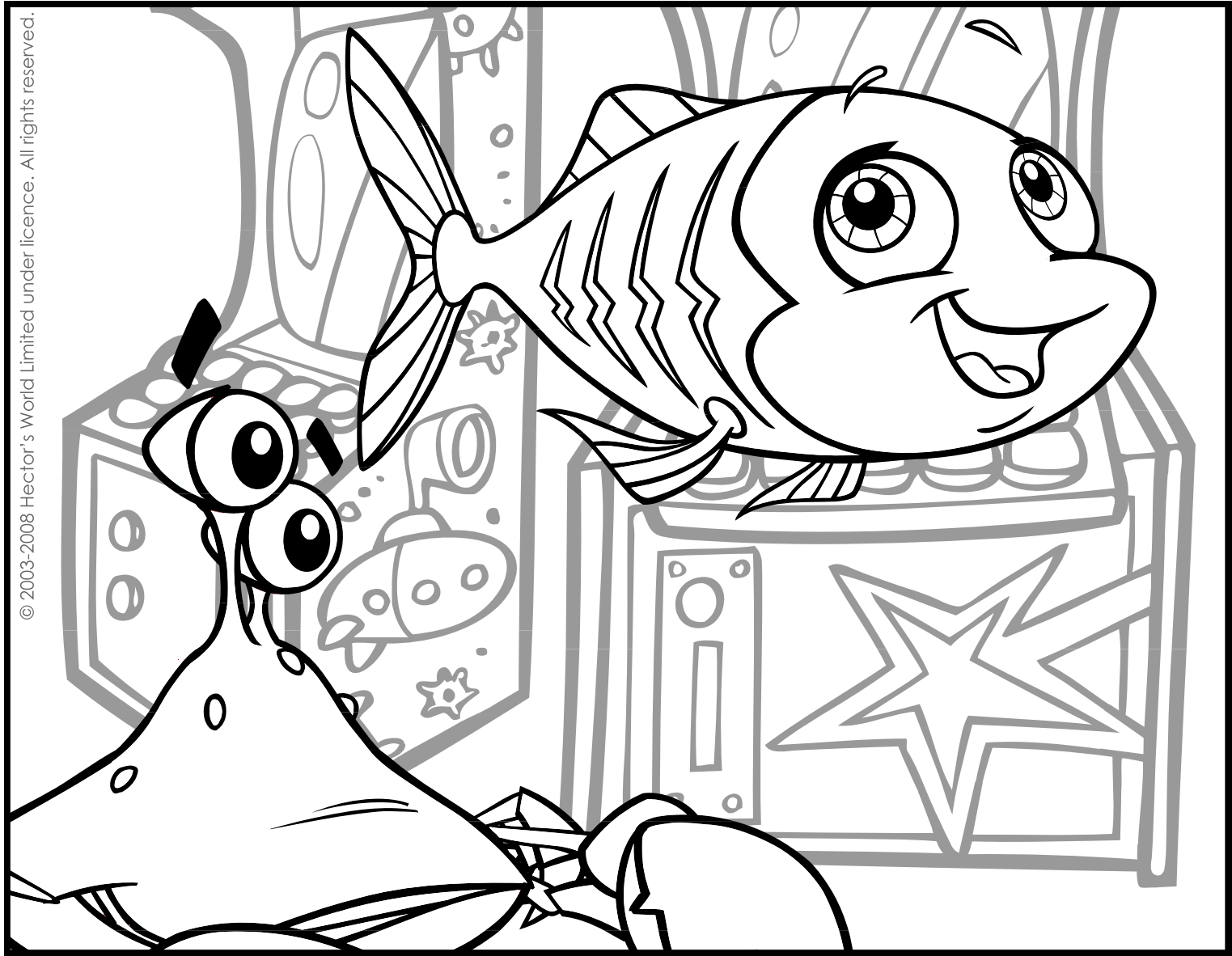
“There they are!” shouted Tama. Hector followed Tama’s gaze, and spotted two small specks in the distance, making their way up a steep stone staircase that lead into a very large games arcade.



"Now that's a surprise," Ming said jokingly. Actually, she wasn't surprised at all, knowing how much Ranjeet and Sprat loved computer games.

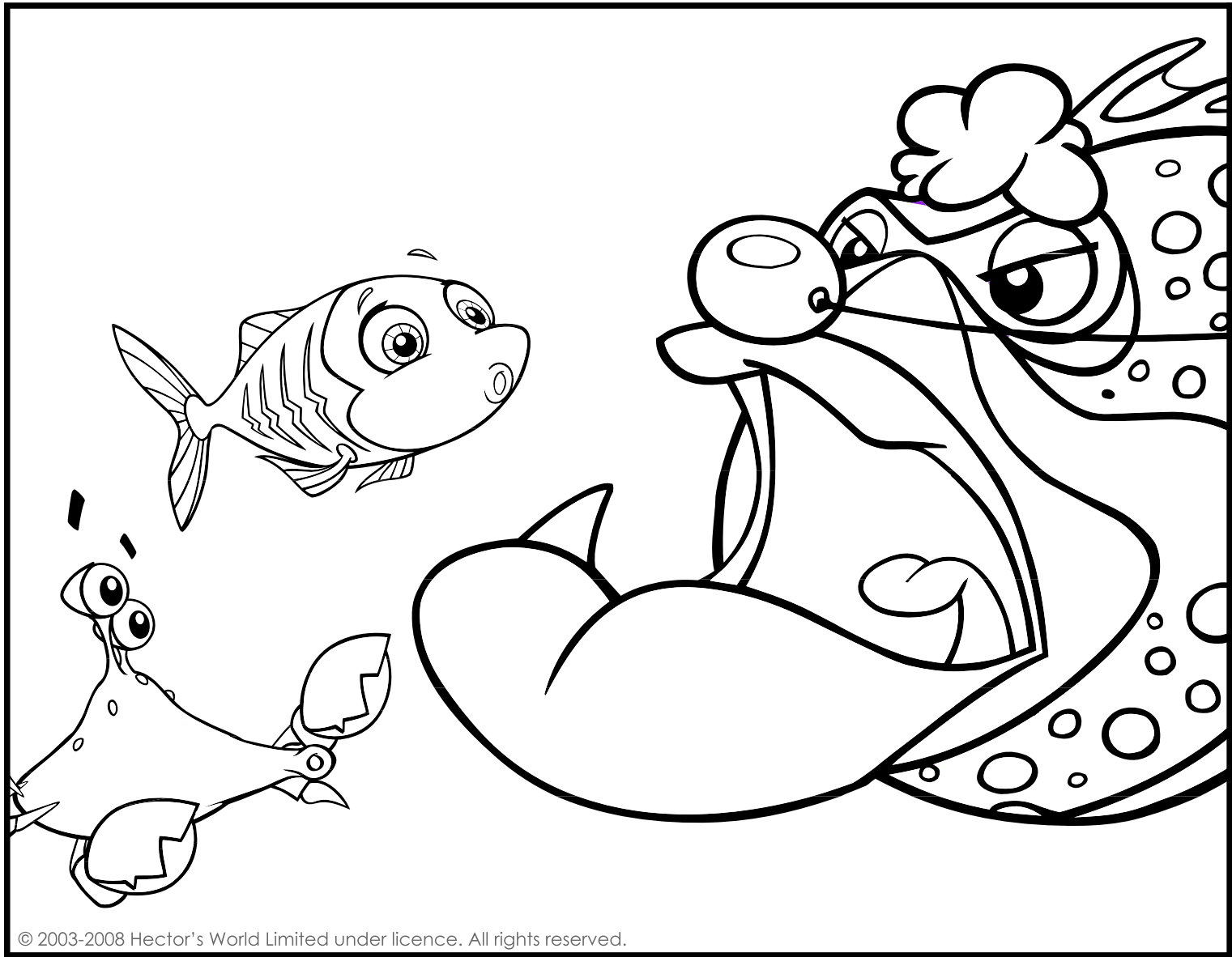
"Let's go!" squealed Tama, barely able to contain himself.

Ming and Hector followed Tama closely as he wove his way through the crowd to join their friends in the games arcade.



Ranjeet and Sprat felt like they were in heaven. They were thrilled with all the flashes, bleeps and excited voices, and were amazed at the number of gaming machines that lined the maze of arcade corridors. Sprat was so distracted by everything that was going on around him he forgot to look where he was going.

As Sprat rounded a corner he bumped straight into a very large purple fish, who had made a very poor attempt at dressing up like a clown. But the big fish's bright red clown nose and silly wig did not disguise how angry he was at being bumped. Sprat was scared. So was Ranjeet. In fact, Ranjeet was so scared his legs had turned to jelly!



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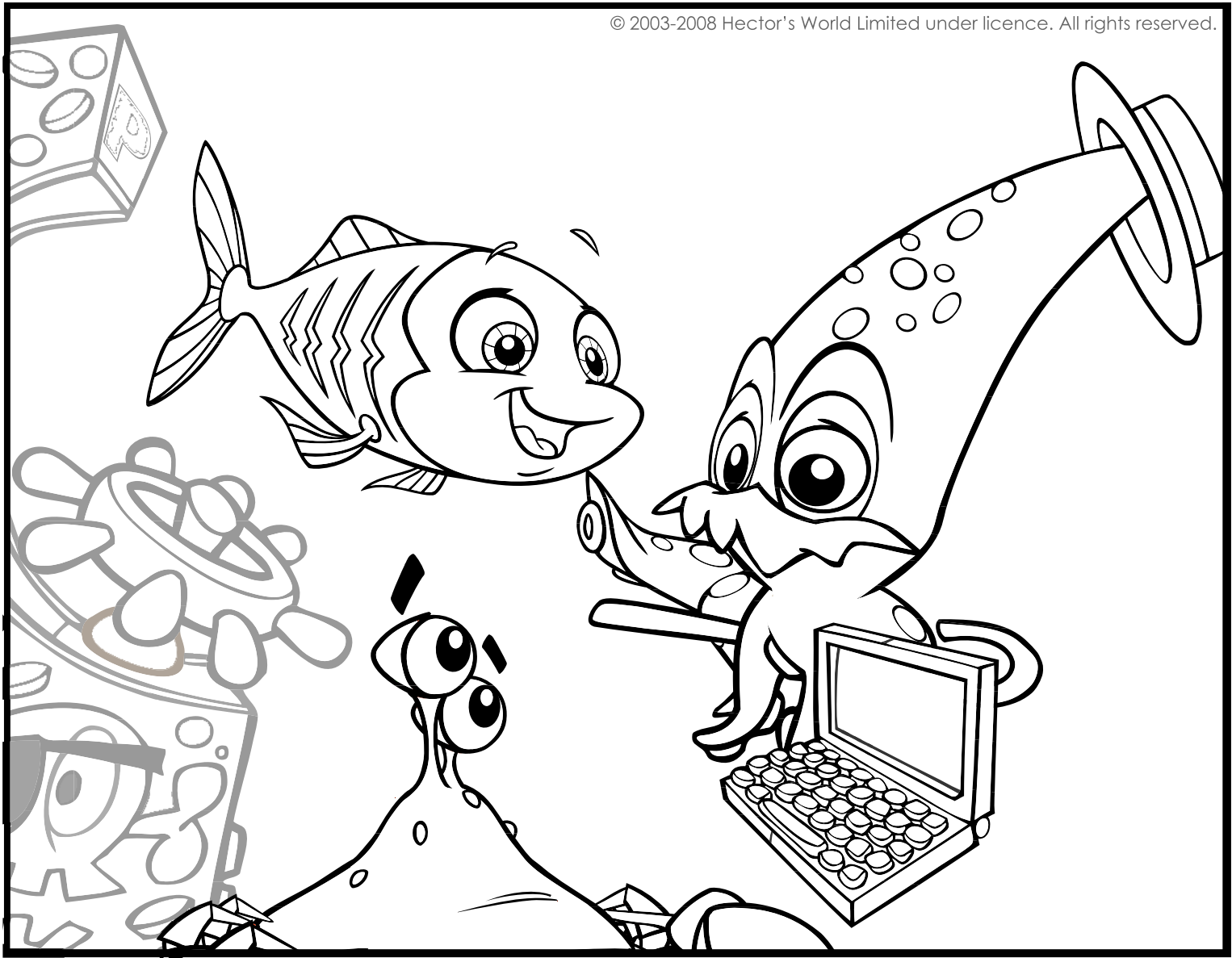
Just as Sprat thought the big fish might pick a fight with him, a familiar face appeared.

"Settle down, Humphrey," said the Squid that they had all met earlier. "Don't you recognise a customer when you see them?"

The big fish, whose name was apparently Humphrey, immediately stood down and let Squid swim past to speak with his young 'customers'. Ranjeet and Sprat were a bit unsure about Squid as Hector and Ming didn't really like the way he'd run a competition earlier in the day. Regardless, Squid put on his biggest smile and friendliest voice and they soon forgot all about it.

"Welcome to the arcade, my young friends, where you can let your imaginations run wild and game to your hearts' content."

When Squid added that all gaming was free as long as you provided some personal details, the two friends were hooked.



Sprat leapt at Squid's laptop to sign up but, surprisingly, Squid said that it wouldn't be necessary as they already had Sprat's personal details on record. Sprat was confused. He knew he'd never been in this arcade before and didn't understand why they would have his personal details on file. Ranjeet reminded Sprat that he had signed up for Squid's music download competition earlier in the day.

Seeing that the two youngsters might begin to figure out what was happening to their personal information, Squid jumped in and distracted them, pointing out how wonderful the arcade was and how much fun they were going to have – and it was all free!

Without another thought, Ranjeet and Sprat raced into the depths of the arcade to join the hundreds of other unsuspecting gamers.

If they had stopped to look behind them, they would have seen the wide, satisfied grins on the faces of Humphrey and Squid.

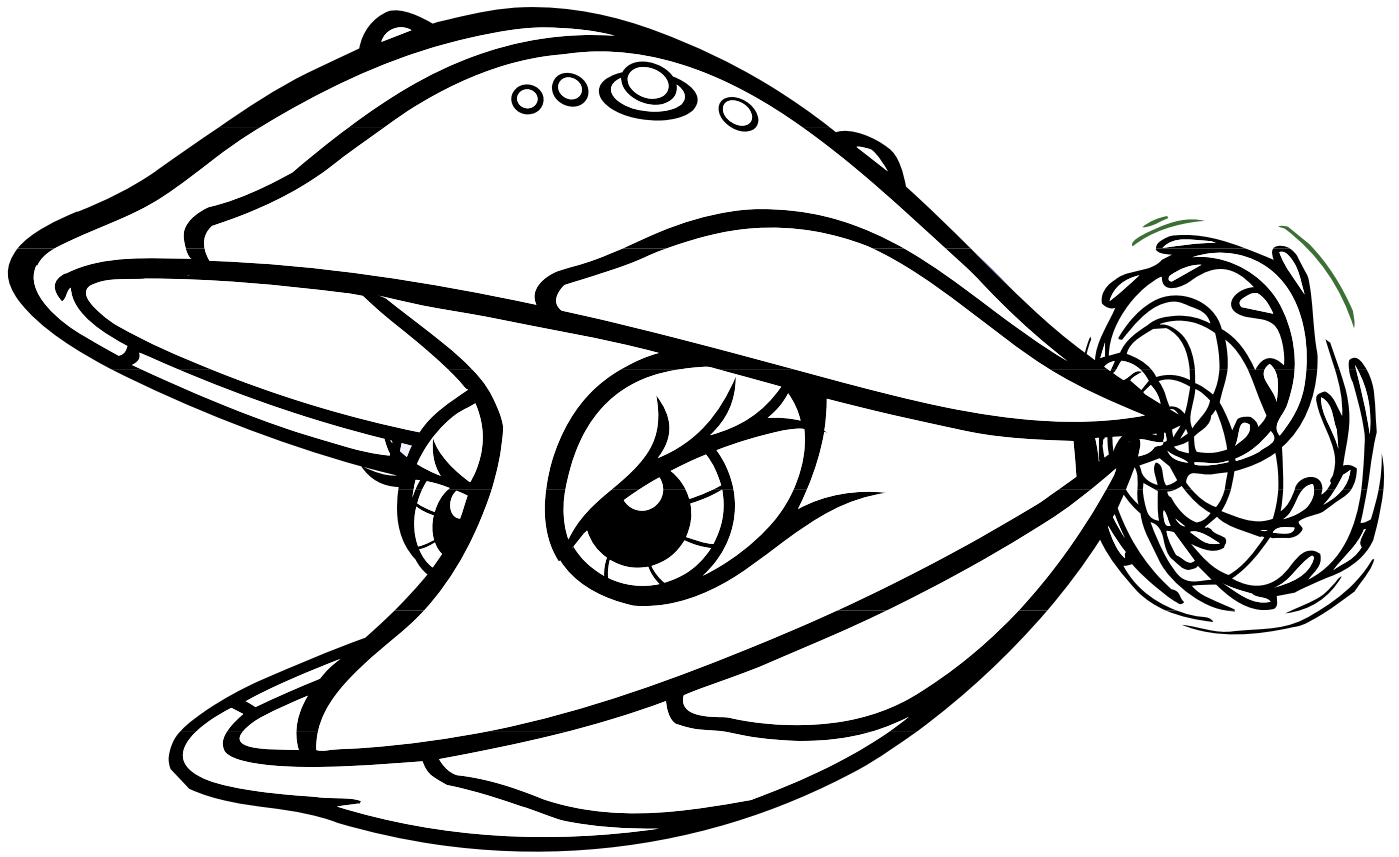


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Not long afterwards, Hector, Ming and Tama reached the entrance to the games arcade. Humphrey had taken up his normal position at the door and eyed them suspiciously as they swam past. Ming eyeballed him straight back. It was only the thought of losing Hector and Tama in the arcade that forced Ming to break her stare. As big and tough a fish as he was, being stared down by this tiny, determined clam made Humphrey a little nervous.

When Ming caught up with Hector and Tama, she was shocked to see Squid with them. What's worse, Hector was signing up Tama for a free game! "Hector, what do you think you're doing?!" asked Ming, sternly.

Squid suddenly piped up, "I'll leave you youngsters to your game. You can play all the games you like." And in the blink of an eye, Squid disappeared into the crowd.



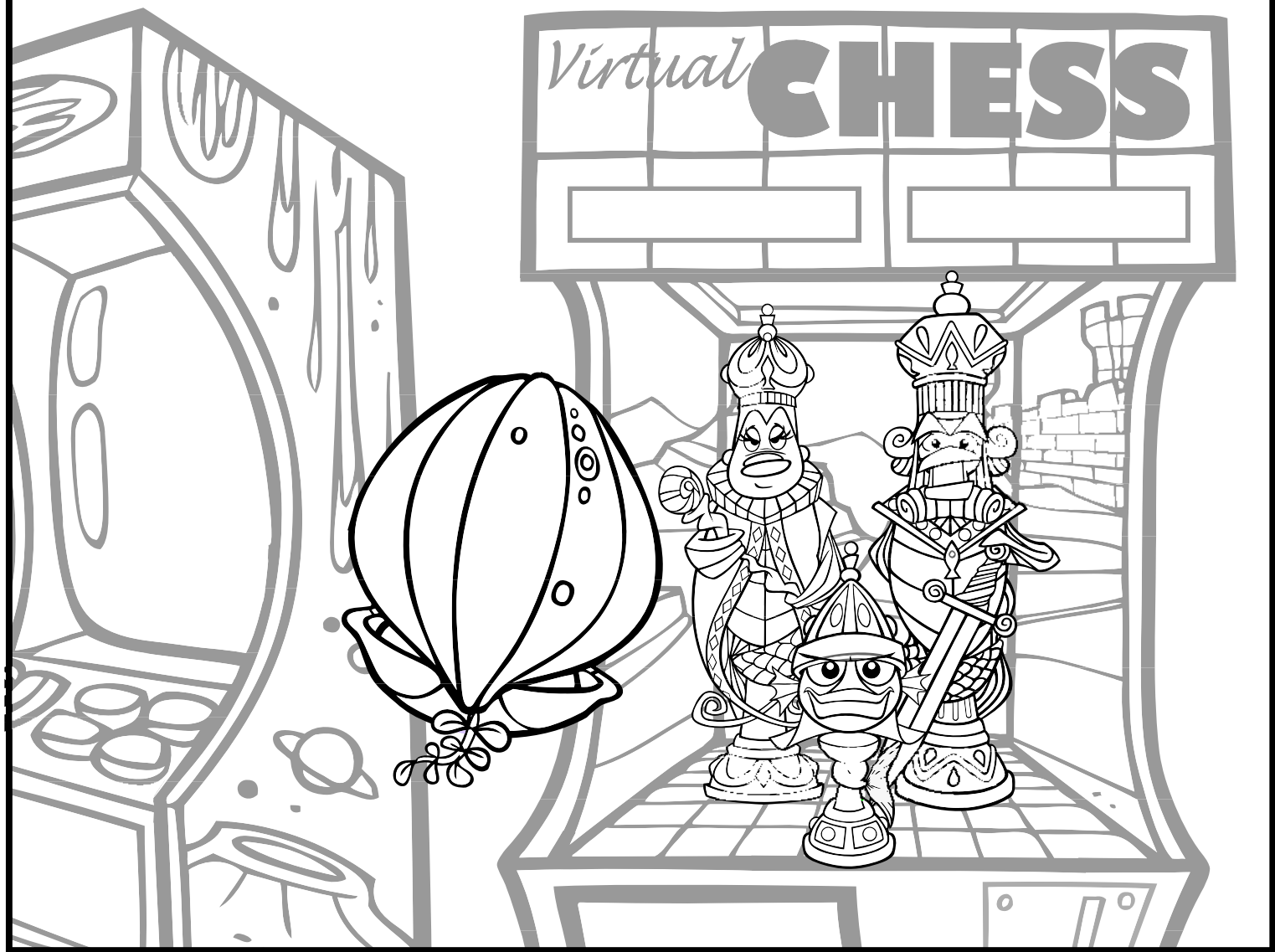
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"That sounds too good to be true," Ming said to herself. Then she suddenly turned her attention back to Hector. "Hector, you know you shouldn't go giving out personal details to people you don't know! Now Tama's personal details are in the arcade computer and who knows where else!"

Hector knew Ming was right. He'd made a mistake, but he didn't like the way she was speaking to him and started defending himself. "Well, you signed Tama up at the bank earlier today!" That was completely different and Hector knew it but it was the first thing that popped into his head.

Tama tried to help by asking Ming to play 'Pound the Plankton' with them, but she was too angry. She stormed off leaving Hector and Tama to play their game.

Hector tried to put on a happy face so he wouldn't ruin Tama's fun, but underneath he knew he'd just made things worse.



Ming pushed her way through the crowd of gamers, not wanting to stay in the arcade a moment longer. Why was everyone so easily tricked into giving out their personal information? She just couldn't understand it!

All of a sudden her thoughts were interrupted by a gruff voice challenging her to play a computer game. Deciding that she was going to give the game a piece of her mind, she spun her shell around and glared at the machine, ready to give it a good telling-off. But to Ming's great surprise, her voice stuck firmly in her throat; she couldn't even get out a whisper. A chess game.... it was a CHESS game.

Ming was a champion chess player and never refused a challenge. The voice had come from the King, one of three computer-generated chess characters that were staring out at her from the holographic game.



"So, you think you're a worthy opponent, do you?" asked the King.

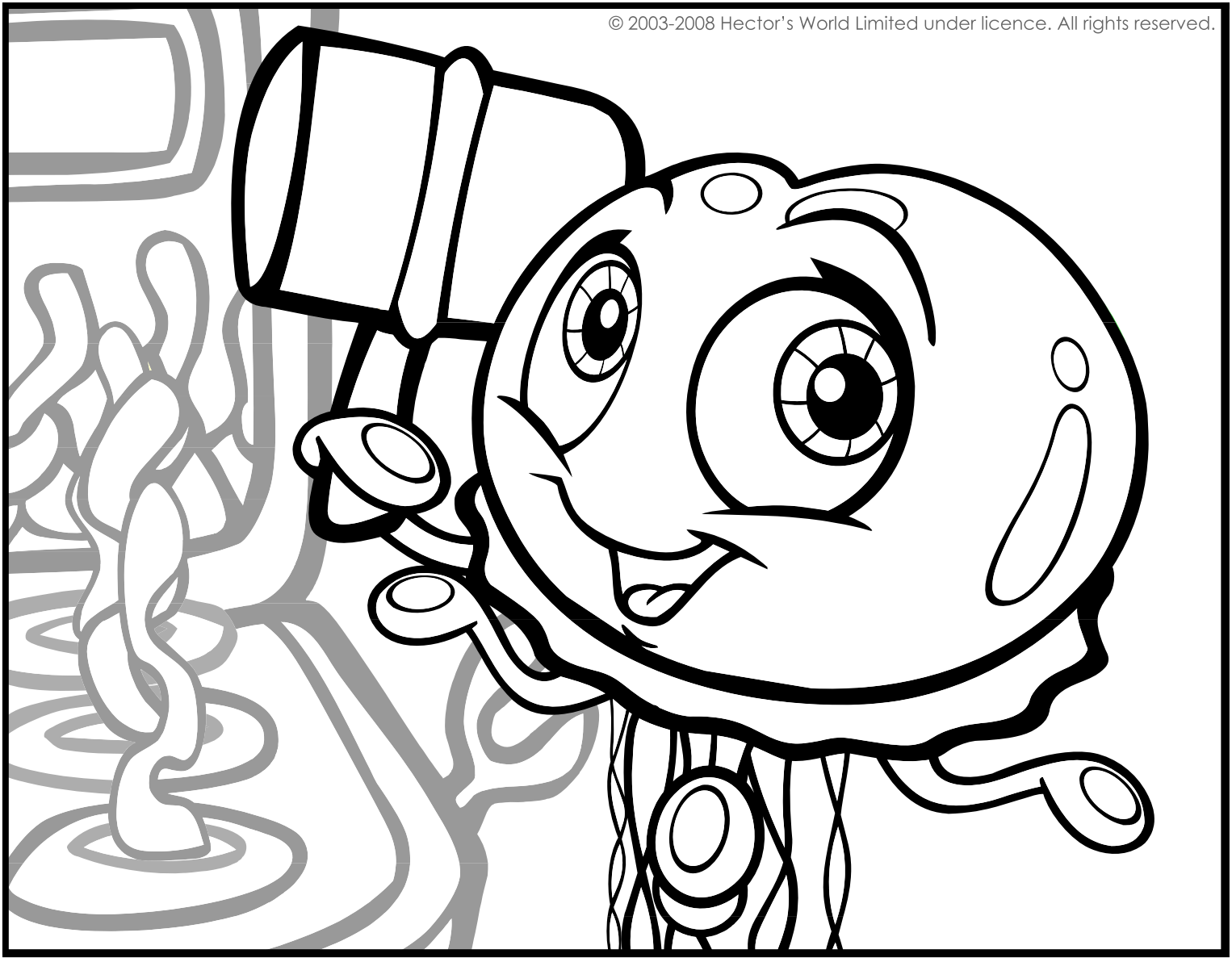
"He means - 'do you think you can beat us at chess?'" explained a cheeky little Pawn who seemed to think Ming was stupid.

"I know what he means!" Ming snapped back. She took an instant dislike to the little game piece and wanted to play against it for that reason alone.

"Good," barked the Pawn. "Then sign up and we'll see just how good you really are!"

Ming stopped in her tracks and realised she'd almost been tricked into giving out her personal information. All of a sudden she felt she shouldn't have been so harsh with Hector, because she now understood how easy it was to be tricked.

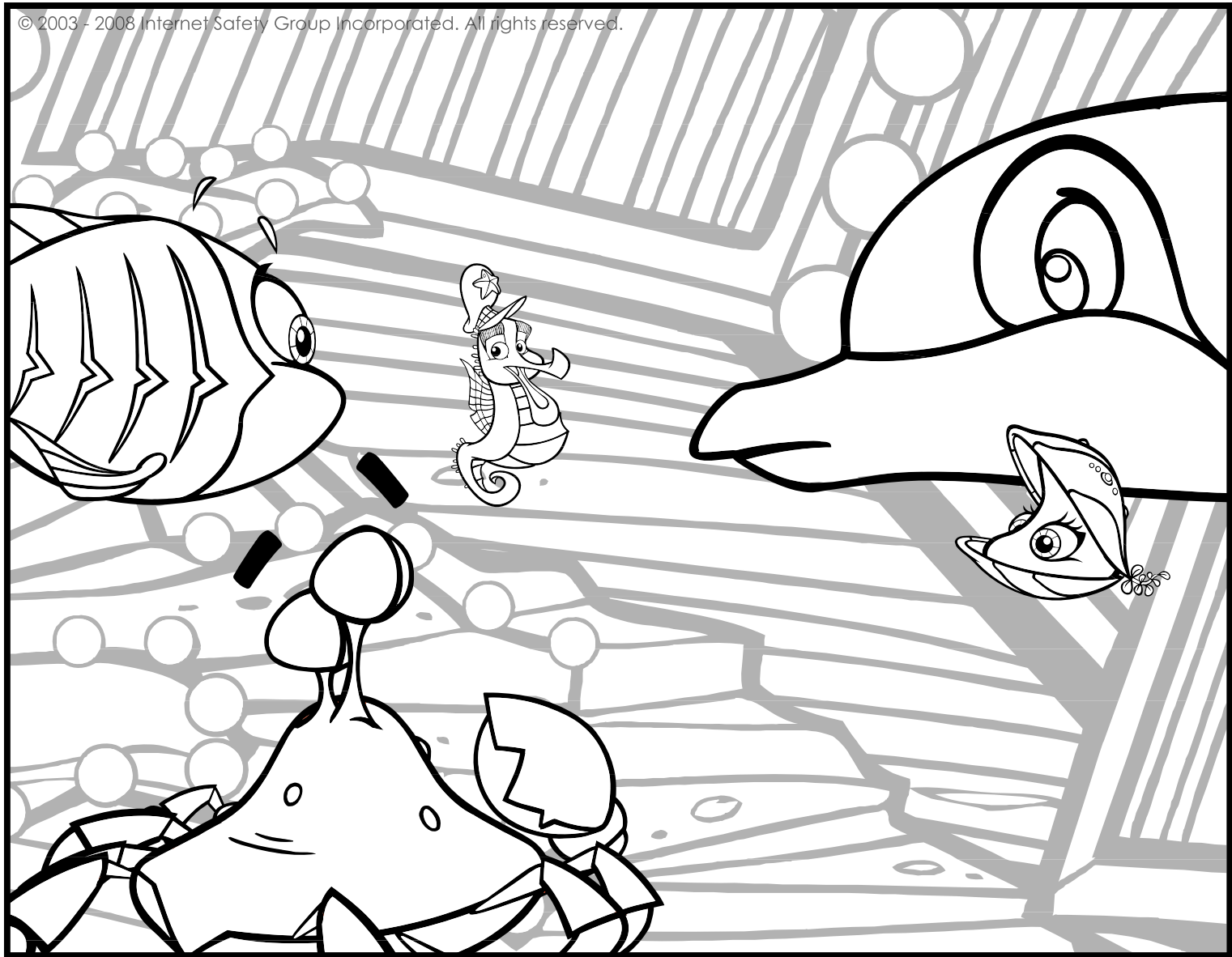
"So, what are you waiting for?" whined the Pawn, breaking into her thoughts. One way or another Ming was going to teach this annoying chess piece a lesson.....



Time passed and the Pawn was doing everything he could to upset Ming and force her into making a wrong decision. He teased her and mocked her, and even told her she was a hopeless chess player! The King and Queen joined in as well!

By this time Ranjeet and Sprat had gamed themselves out and were ready to leave the arcade. It didn't take them long to find Ming; all they had to do was follow the arguing voices. Ming was in a full blown shouting match with a chess game; something that, quite frankly, baffled them all.

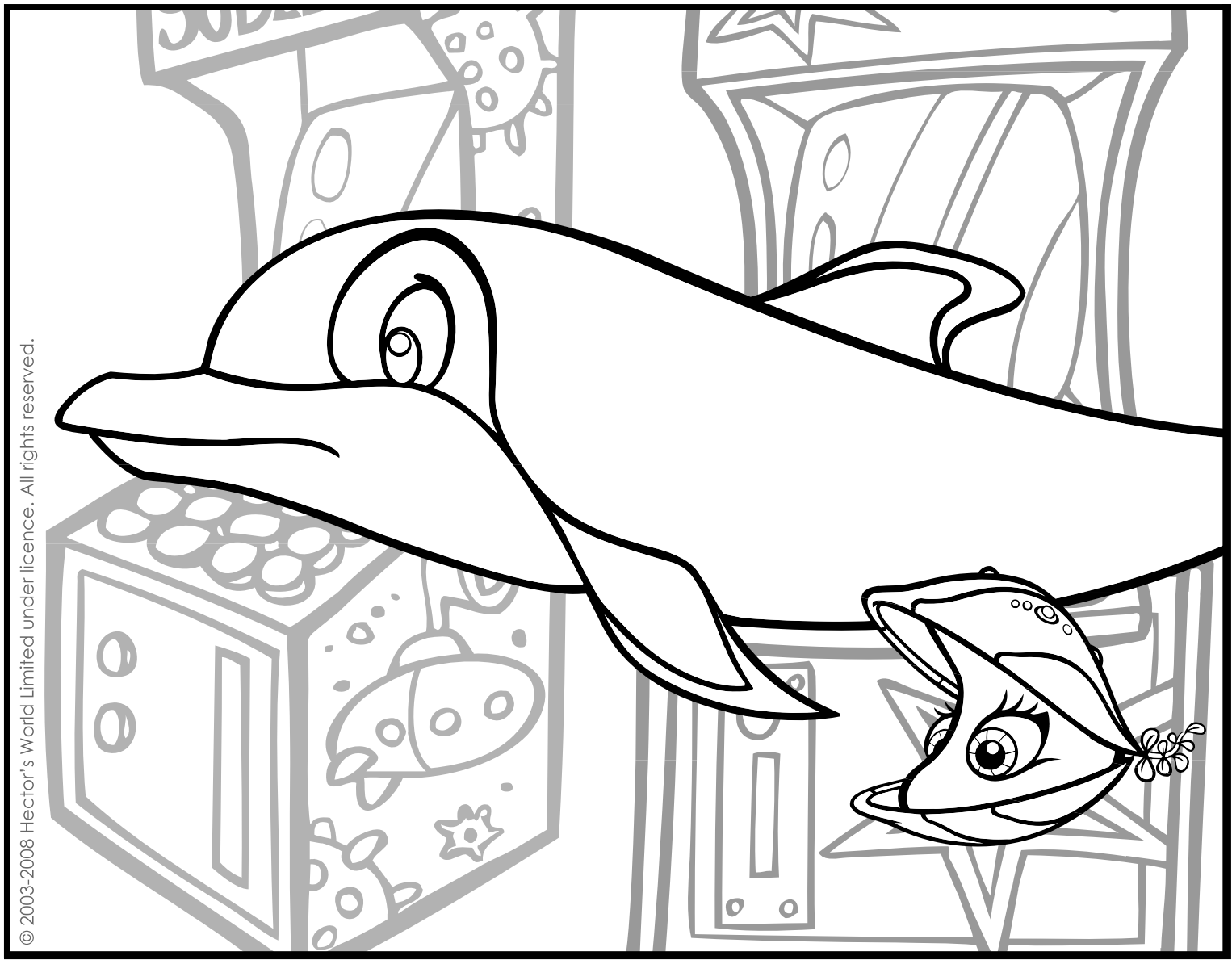
When Hector called to Tama to finish up his game, Tama waved back with his giant plankton pounding hammer, 'Yep, almost done! Be there in a second!'



Hector, Ranjeet and Sprat turned their attention back to Ming. When she finally realised they were watching her, she said something to the chess game and stormed off towards the exit, leaving a rather defeated looking Pawn in her wake. The three friends decided to follow at a safe distance.

When they all got outside, Constable Solosolave was there to meet them. Humphrey was still on door duty - that was until he spied Constable Solosolave - and then he took off quickly.

"I hope you lot are being very careful about giving out your personal information to anyone you don't know. Especially in places like this arcade." By the looks on their faces Constable Solosolave knew they had. Ranjeet and Sprat decided to disappear before they had to answer any difficult questions.



Constable Solosolave advised the friends, "Keep a close eye on those two. I've got to continue my investigations." With that, Constable Solosolave disappeared in a swirl of bubbles.

Just as Hector and Ming were about to swim off to follow their friends, Hector had a terrible thought. "Ming?" Hector asked blankly.

"Yes?" she replied, looking rather concerned.

“Where’s Tama?”

Realising that they had almost left their youngest friend behind, Hector and Ming dashed back into the arcade together to look for Tama.

To be continued.....



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