

## LITTLE SILVER FISH

Roser stretches out in the hammock in the garden. She has a busy day ahead of her: she has to finish the book she borrowed from the school library. / Reading is always an uphill struggle, all the letters stick together, so many words, one after another... what hard work!

Today's book seems to be about cooking. It says things like: *Paula, Pol, Piu and Riu set the table for supper. Paula puts out the pepper pot. The soup needs salt. / Simon sprinkles salt on the soup. Sam's snail slurps soup. Marti eats his soup and has a wee.* As Roser reads, she rocks in her hammock, feeling cosier and cosier. Her eyelids droop, the words go blurry, and the letters seem to swap places, until she hears voices shouting:

“Look in the sea! It's full of little silver fish”

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The letters have disappeared and Roser feels as light as air – and realises she's flying! Then a girl comes running past.

“Hey! Hello! My name is Roser! And I'm going to see the sea. I've heard that there are lots of silver fish!”

“What do I care? I'm in a hurry. Can't you hear my mother shouting?”

“Paulaaaaa! Paula put out the pepper pot please, Dad's on his way!”

“How funny! It sounds like a sentence from the book I'm reading!”

“What's the matter with you? I'm Paula, Paula Put-out-the-pepper-pot and I'm fed up of laying the table because Dad's on his way home and all that nonsense. And I don't like eating with six other people at the table! And when Pol, Piu, Riu and Marti come for tea I don't care whether the soup's salty so long as there's a peck of pepper in the pot.

“No way! You can't be Paula Put-out-the-pepper-pot! I thought you didn't exist!”

But Paula hears her mother shouting:

“Paulaaaaa! Paula put out the pepper pot!”

Roser is alone again, and while she wonders what to do, she hears:

“Silver fish, little silver fish!”

So she carries on flying until... she runs into a boy jumping high, high into the air, with his feet pressed together.

“Hey! Why can't you watch where you're going?” he shouts.

“Of course I'm watching where I'm going! I've only just learnt to fly so I'm not very good at it yet” says Roser defensively.

“Ooh, I see, you know how to fly! – I'm Sam with his Snail and I know how to jump really high. Jumping's difficult, 'cause you have to keep your feet together the whole time, but flying's easy – you just have to dream that you're doing it.”

“Wow! When I've got the hang of flying, will you teach me to jump?” - said Roser playfully.

“Don't be silly! Buzz off, I'm in a hurry!”

Roser is astonished. But before she's had time to think, a small boy appears.

“Hello little one, who are you?” she asks.

“I'm Marti and I can wee, this way, that way, and all round the garden! It's a bit like watering plants!”

Roser looks down and sees how healthy the geraniums Marti is watering look.

“How interesting! I never knew anyone could jump so high or wee so elegantly.”

All of a sudden, Roser feels very tired. But she wants to see the little silver fish so much, that she forces herself to keep going until the end of her journey.

“Goodness me! That blue is wet!” she says, dabbling her toe.

“What a strange girl. What do you expect the sea to be like?”

Roser looks at the strange person who'd spoken to her:

“If that's the sea then you must be a little silver fish,” she says, adding, “I'm Roser and I know how to fly.”

“No-one around here flies – it's too expensive and we don't have the time. So come here and learn how to swim – it's about time you did!”

Then Roser wets her other foot. To her surprise, she sees that all sorts of words and letters are sticking to her legs. They look familiar, but mean nothing to her. The little fish shows her how to put them in order. All of a sudden, everything is easy. It's easy to read in a sea of words when it smells like water and salt. But when she wants to turn the page she realises that the sea of words is up to her neck, making it difficult for her to breathe. The little fish looks at her disapprovingly, and then says:

“Now you've really made a mess of things! And the worst's on its way! The sea king's angry!”

“Who dares awaken me?” – says the sea.

“I’m Roser! And I fell asleep reading a really hard book!”

“What did you say? Reading? You want to read my sea to steal my secrets? Reading is punishable by prison! Letters! Arrest her! No-one will take my secrets!”

Roser finds herself surrounded by letters in search of meaning, all shouting at her. Fortunately, the capital letters form a ring around her and whisper:

“You’re asleep! To get out of here, you have to shout as loud as you can: I want to read in the garden, I want to to read in the garden!”

And Roser, who’s discovered that reading is an amazing, exciting and astounding adventure, decides to do as the capital letters say, and repeats the magic words:

“I want to read in the garden!”

Suddenly, Roser feels the sea crash: Boom!

And she starts to fall, and fall, and fall until she falls to the ground under the hammock with her book on her head like a hat. When she wakes up, Roser doesn’t remember a thing, because, luckily for her, she has the memory of a fish! But although she’s forgotten what happened, for some reason, words are much easier to read! Once upon a time, there was a girl called Paula Put out the Pepper. Paula had two friends, Pol and Marti, whom she always invited for dinner when there was soup, as her Mum made very good soup. Paula’s Dad was an adventurer and when he was on his way home, her mother would say to her:

“Paula, Dad’s coming! And they would both go outside to wait for him...”

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