

Your Personal Information Online

Episode 3

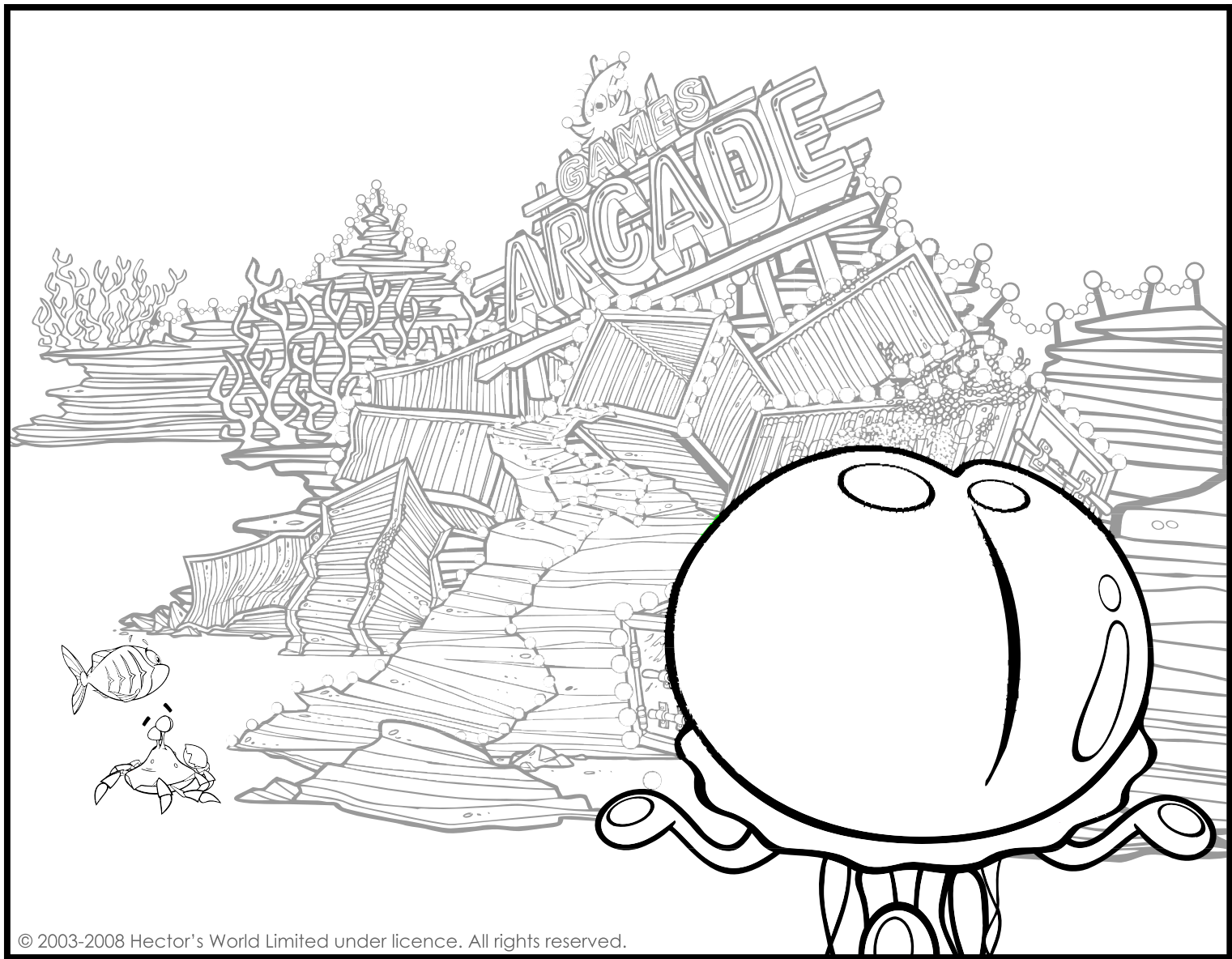
"It's a Serious Game"

featuring

Hector Protector® and his friends



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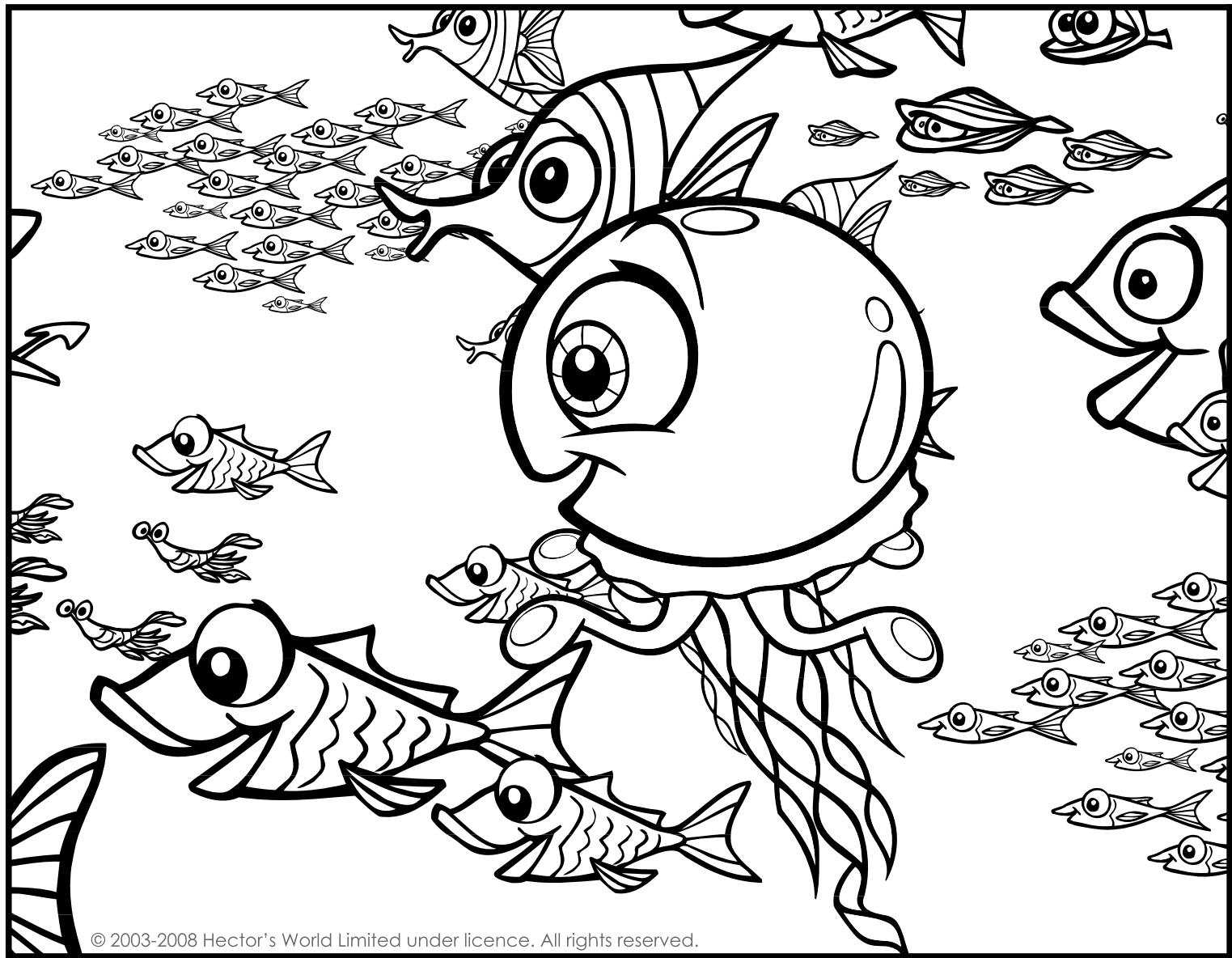
It was near midday in the underwater settlement of Silicon Deep. The carnival was almost bursting at the seams with visitors from all across the ocean.

The sounds of laughter echoed through the waters of Silicon Deep, and out into the wider ocean.

Hector, Ming and Tama had made their way back to the main entrance to check in with Miss Finney, their youth group leader.

"Thanks for checking in. I'll be here if you need me," called Miss Finney, as the trio headed back into the bustling crowd. "Let's try and find Ranjeet and Sprat," said Hector.

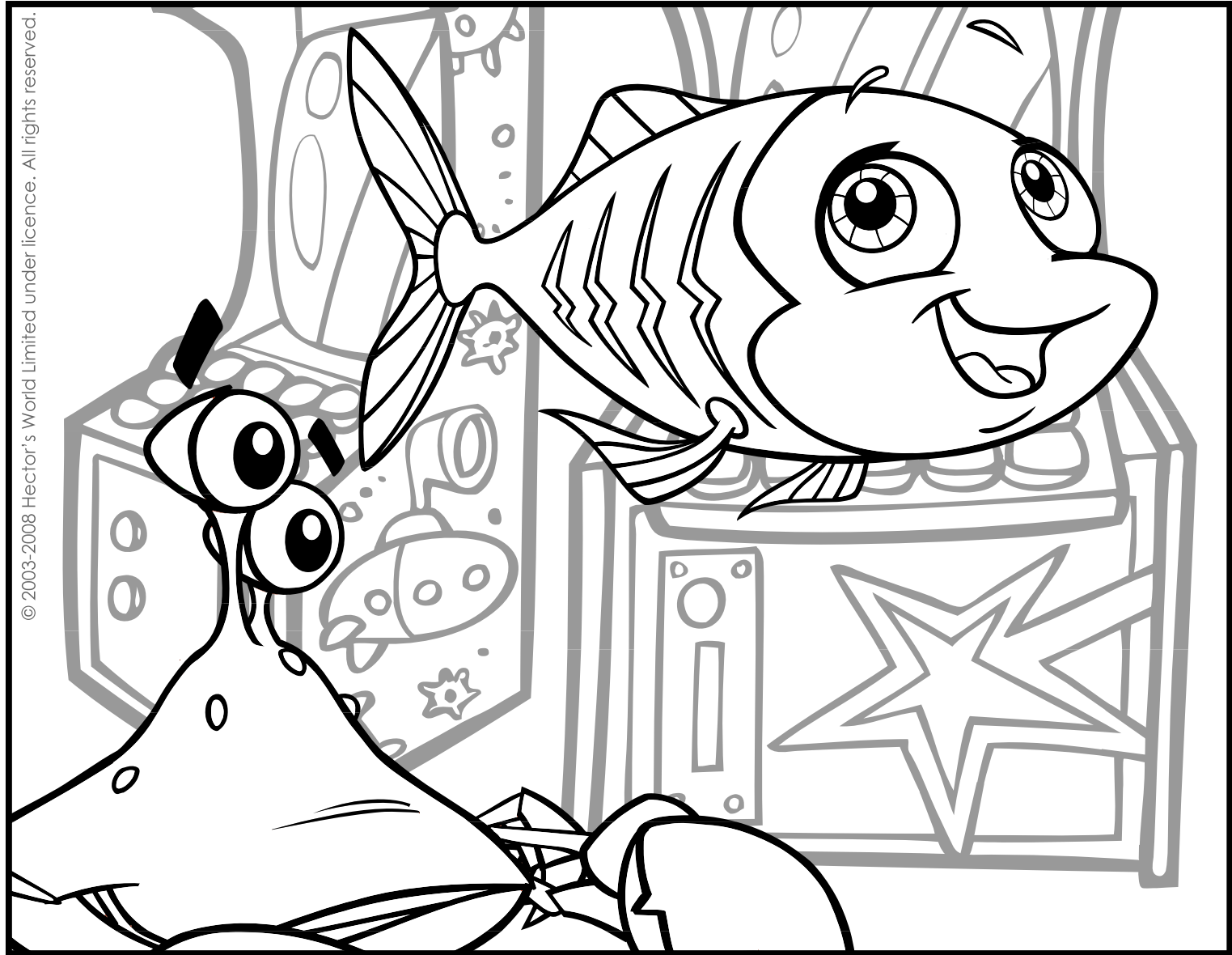
"There they are!" shouted Tama. Hector and Ming followed Tama's gaze, and spotted two distant shapes making their way up the stone stairs of a very large games arcade.



“What a surprise,” Ming said jokingly. Actually, she wasn’t surprised at all. Everyone knew how much Ranjeet and Sprat loved computer games.

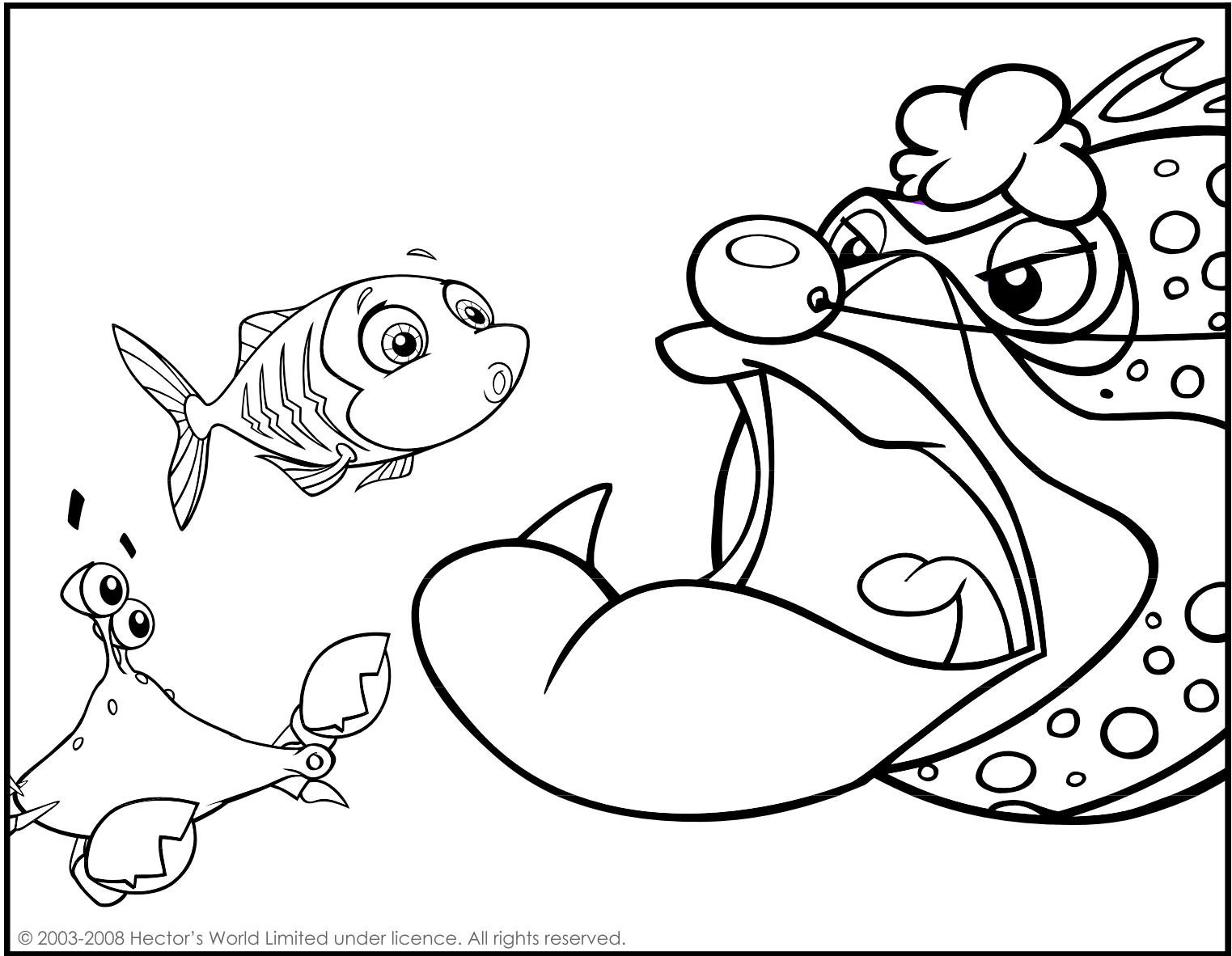
“Let’s go!” squealed Tama, as he zig-zagged through the crowd toward the games arcade.

Hector and Ming followed Tama closely to make sure he didn’t get lost.



Ranjeet and Sprat felt like they were in heaven. The flashing colours, electronic sounds and excited voices inside the games arcade, had the two friends completely mesmerized. In fact, they were both so distracted, that Sprat bumped into a very large purple fish. “Hey! Watch where you’re going!” he yelled at Sprat.

Sprat and Ranjeet suddenly noticed that the purple fish was wearing a large clown nose, and a curly red wig. But, the big fish’s attempt to dress up like a clown did not disguise how angry he was, nor did it make Sprat or Ranjeet any less scared. Ranjeet was certain his legs had turned to jelly!



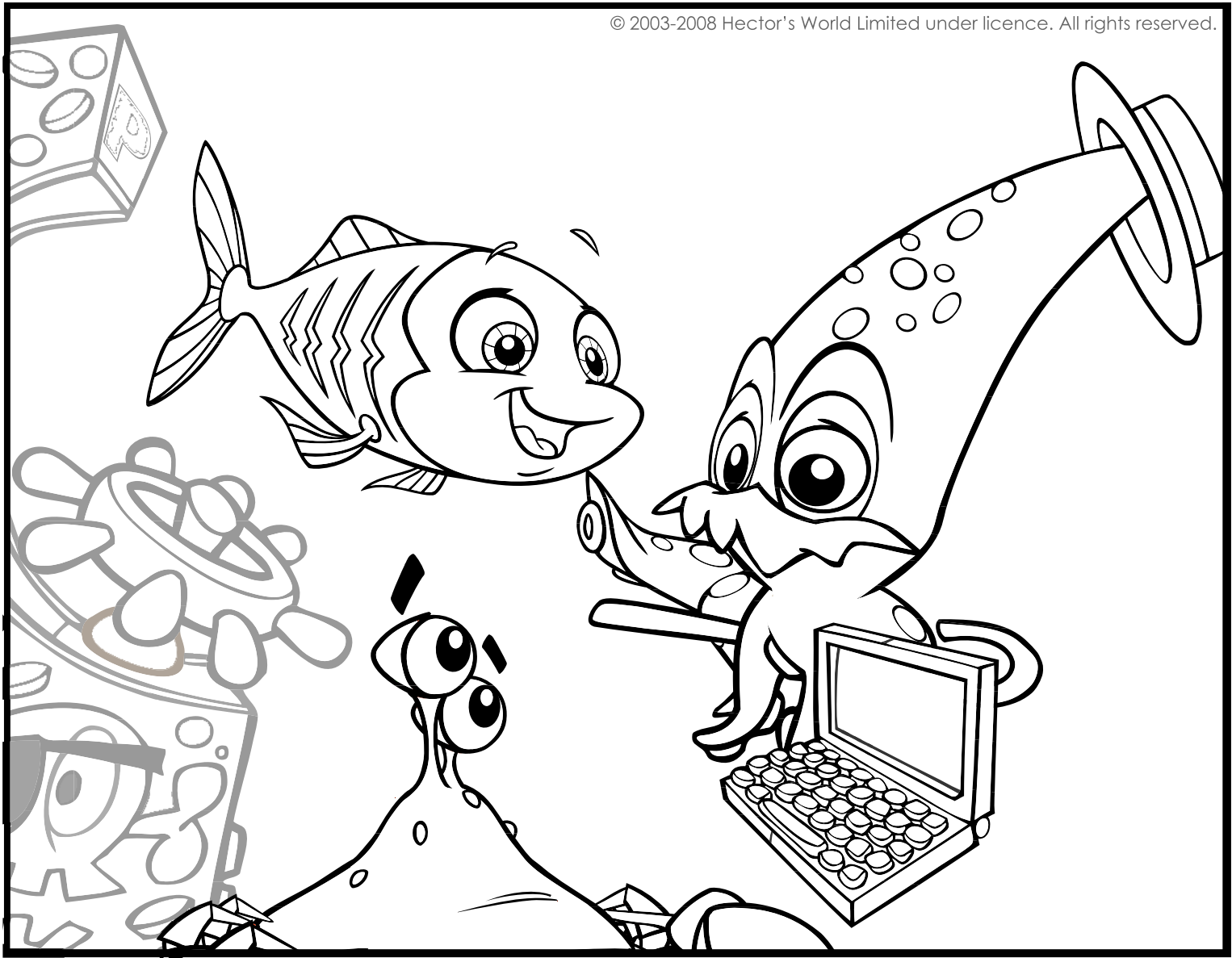
Just as Sprat thought the big fish might pick a fight with him, a familiar face appeared.

“Settle down, Humphrey,” said the squid that they had all met earlier.
“Don’t you recognise customers 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 that day. But, 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 when they first arrived at the carnival.

Seeing that the two youngsters might start asking questions about what was happening to their personal information, Squid jumped in and distracted them. He pointed out how wonderful the arcade was and how much fun they were going to have – and it was all free!

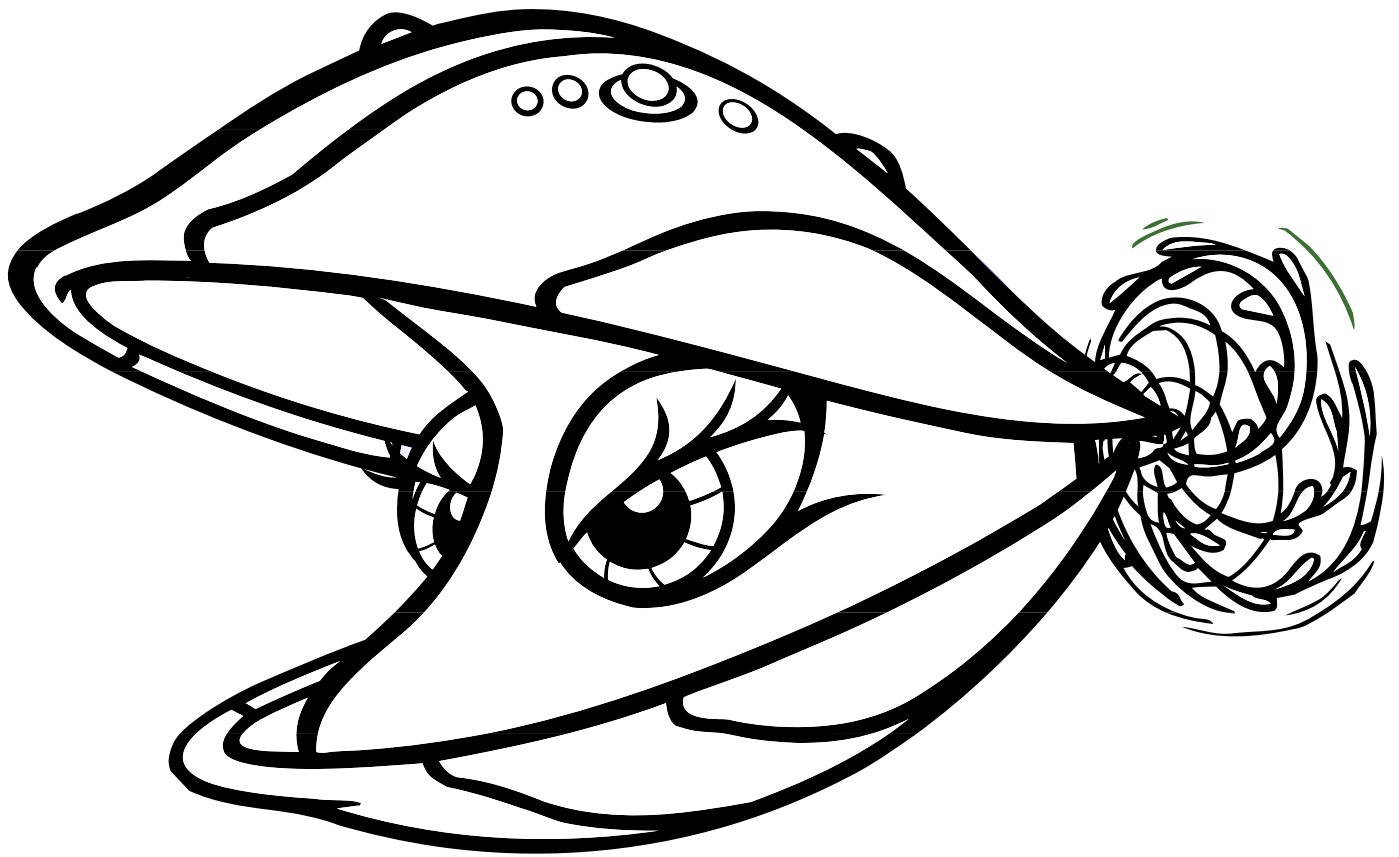
Without another thought, Ranjeet and Sprat raced into the depths of the arcade to join the hundreds of other unsuspecting gamers. If they had stopped to look behind them, they would have seen Squid and Humphrey staring after them with sinister grins spread across their faces.



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



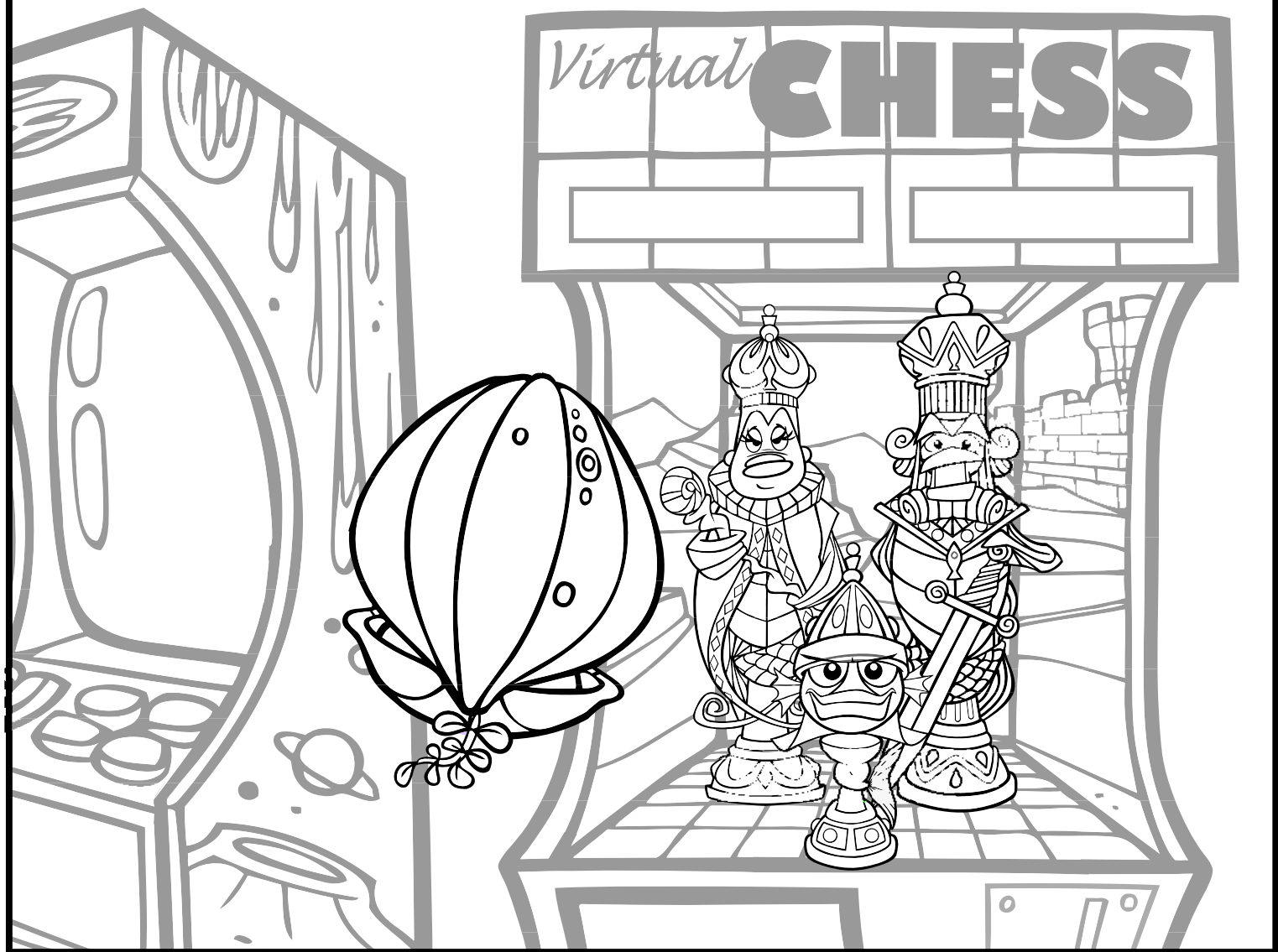
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“That sounds too good to be true,” Ming said to herself. Then she suddenly turned her attention back to Hector. “Hector, you know you shouldn’t go giving out personal details to people you don’t know! Now Tama’s personal details are in the arcade computer 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 slipped out of his mouth before he had time to think.

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 thought to herself. Ming 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, Ming spun around and glared at the machine, ready to give it a good telling-off. But to her great surprise, Ming's voice stuck firmly in her throat; she couldn't even get out a whisper. A chess game.... it was a CHESS game.

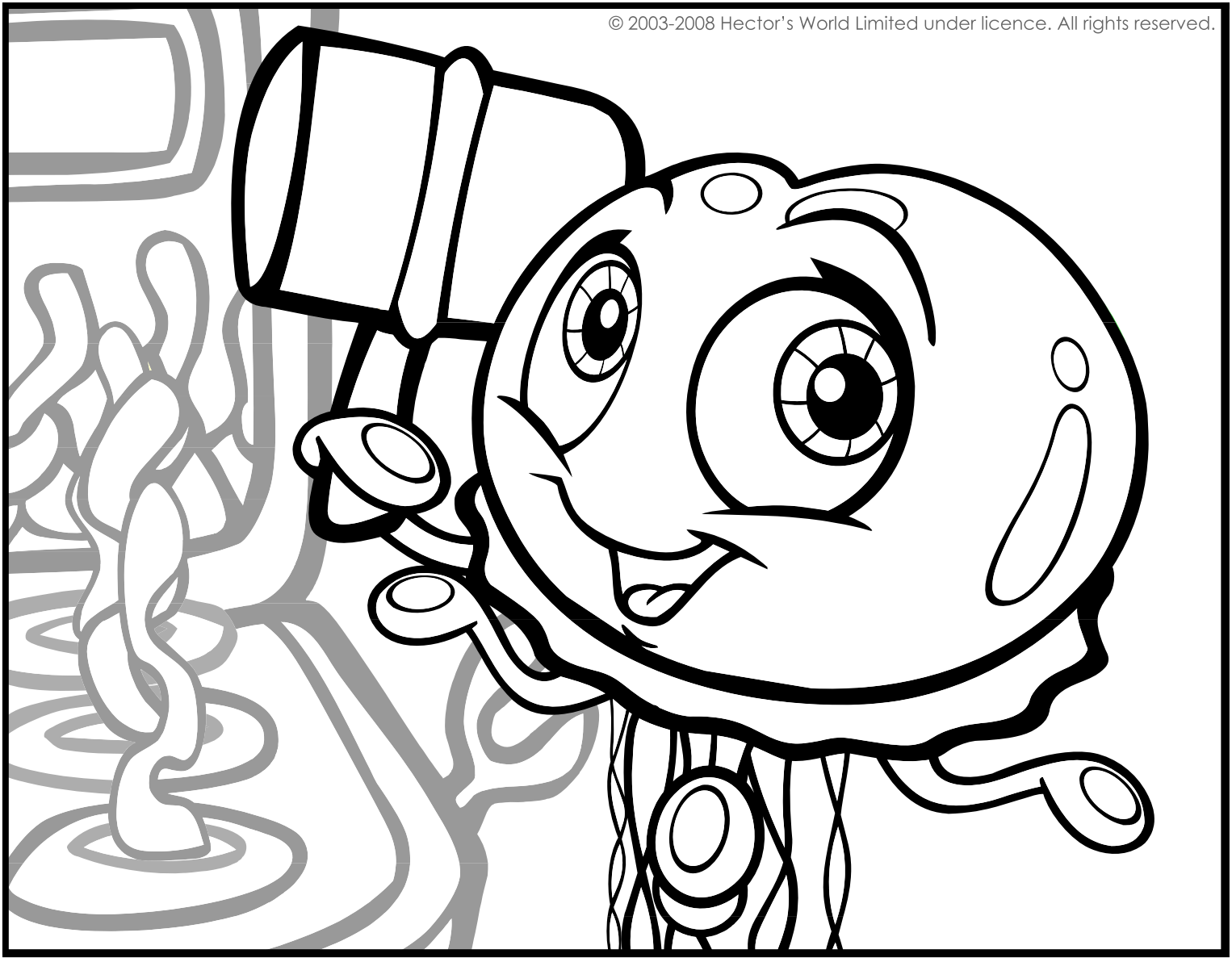
Ming was a champion chess player and never refused a challenge at the chess board. This challenge had come from the King, one of three computer-generated chess characters that were staring out at her from the holographic game.



"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!"

A keyboard suddenly sprung out from the game, and settled in front of her. Ming paused 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 on Hector, as she was beginning to understand how easy it was to be tricked.

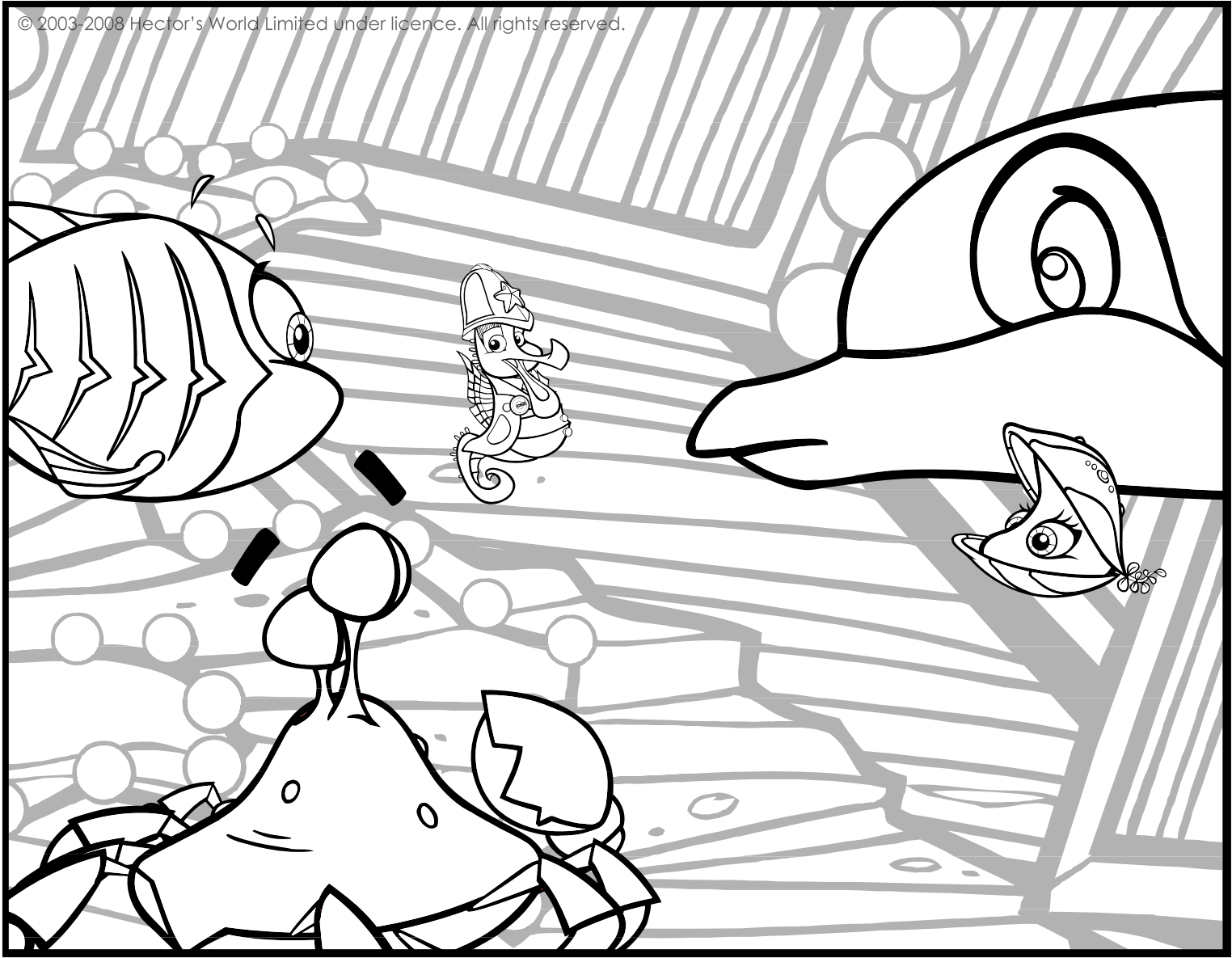
"So, what are you waiting for?" whined the pawn, breaking into her thoughts. One way or another Ming was going to teach this annoying chess piece a lesson.....



Time passed and the pawn was doing everything he could to upset Ming and trick 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. Hector joined them, and 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."

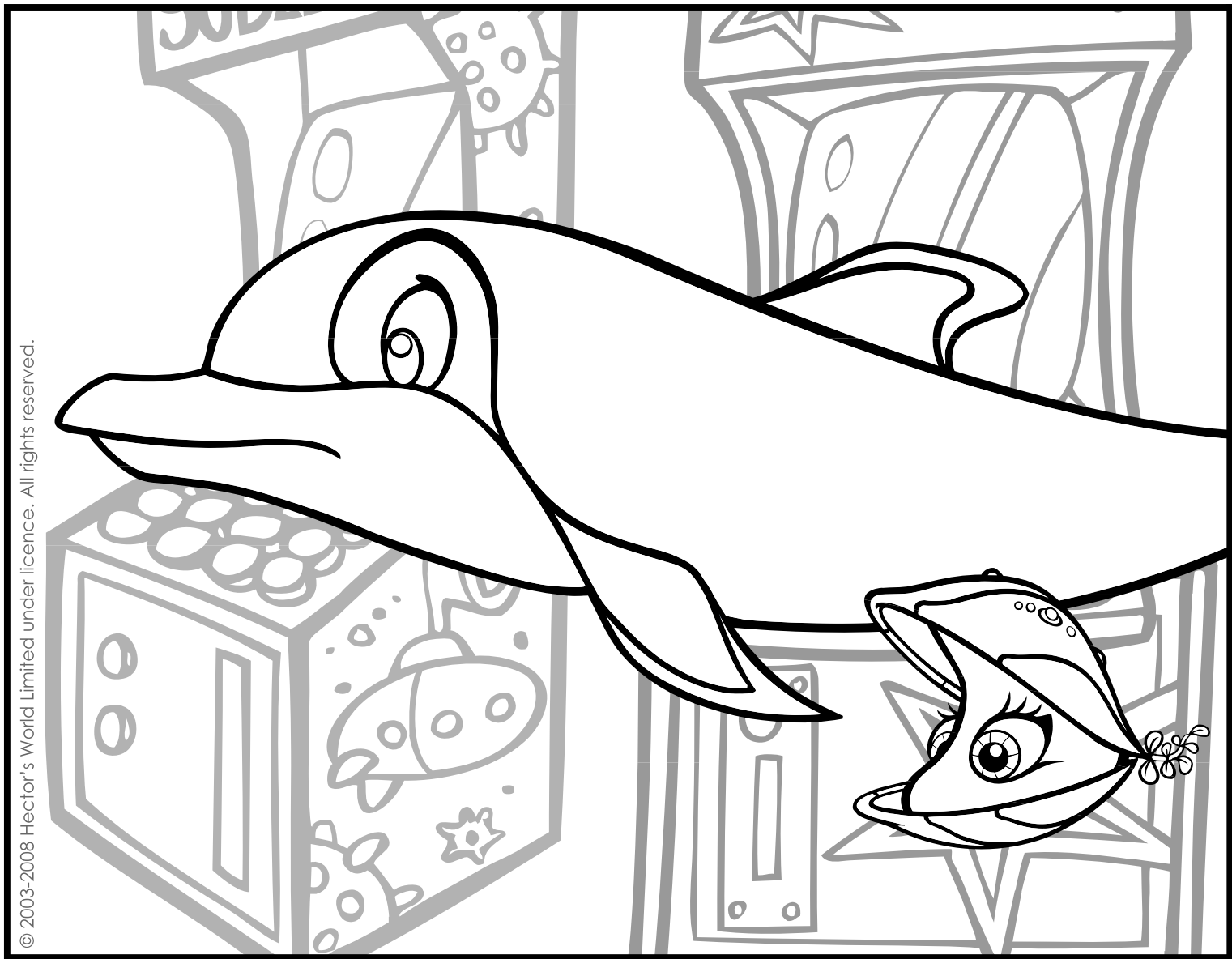
Suddenly the sound of arguing caught their attention. Hector followed the familiar voice to find Ming in a full-blown shouting match with a chess game.



When Ming finally realised that Ranjeet, Sprat and Hector were watching her, she mumbled something to the 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 got outside, PC Jim was there to meet them. Humphrey was still on door duty - that was until he spied PC Jim - 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." But by the looks on their faces, PC Jim knew that he was already too late. Ranjeet and Sprat suddenly decided to excuse themselves before they had to answer any difficult questions.



“Keep a close eye on those lads,” PC Jim advised Hector. “I’ve got to continue my investigations.” With that, PC Jim vanished in a swirl of bubbles.

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

“Yes?” Ming 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 to look for Tama.

To be continued.....



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