ALL STARS

HELAINE BECKER

ILLUSTRATED BY SAMPAR



irate Power Play!

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None of this story would have ever happened if Reese McSkittles hadn't left his right mitten behind at the rink.

It had been a great hockey practice — maybe the best practice the Looney Bay All-Stars had ever had. Randall Wetherbury had suddenly mastered skating backward, so that he no longer kept smashing bum-first into the boards. The Teeny Weeny Heany Twins



were awesome "Pillars of Power" on the defensive line. And Shannon Weiss's slapshot sizzled in a way it never had before.

Reese was so thrilled by the change that he was halfway home before he realized one of his mittens was missing. He knew that if he was late for dinner again, his mother would shred him into lobster salad. But what if he returned home without the mitten, so lovingly knitted by Grandma Buckminster?

He turned back.

It was nearly dark by the time Reese got to the rink. He hunted everywhere for the mitten. It was not on the bench. It was not under the bench. Reese got down on his hands and knees to search behind the bench. He found a Three

Musketeers wrapper and a grotty old coin, but no mitten.

He flicked away the wrapper, dumped the coin in his pocket and kept searching. Just as Reese's thumb touched



a nasty blob of frozen chewing gum, he felt a big, hairy hand grip the back of his neck.

Suddenly Reese was yanked to his feet. The pirate — for the big, hairy hand did belong to a pirate — put his face right up to Reese's.

"What have we here?" boomed the pirate's big, hairy voice. "A wee land-lubber, methinks!"

"Let me go, you creep!" Reese shouted. He kicked the pirate in the knee, bit him on the wrist, pinched him in the armpit, but still couldn't break free.

"Yo, ho, ho!" laughed the pirate. He lifted Reese off the ground with one meaty fist. "You are a bonny and spirited lad," he nodded approvingly. "I think I'll keep you. Look what I found, me boys!

A new navvy to do our chores!"

Shapes began to gather in the shadows. There were four, eight, then twenty pirates! "Hooray! Hooray!" rose the cheers from the pirate crew. "Someone else to swab the deck!"

The captain — for the pirate gripping Reese was indeed the captain — shook Reese. "Our ship, the *Mistress of*



Doom, lies yonder in that dark cove. You come quietly, lad, or we'll feed you to the fish."

"Okay!" Reese squirmed. "Just put me down!"

The pirate dropped him with a thunk. "Now step lively, or we'll carry you by your toes!"

"Aye, aye, I guess," Reese muttered.



He shouldered his hockey bag, fell into line behind the captain and reluctantly marched into the darkness.





Chapter 2

The pirates snaked along a narrow path to the cove. A ghostly ship loomed out of the mist. Reese gazed up in awe at the ship's Jolly Roger. "I didn't know there were still pirates. Not for real, I mean."

"No pirates?" gasped the captain.

"Why, that's like saying there's no stars and no water! You must be daft, lad.

There have been pirates in these parts



for two hundred years and more!

"Why, my granddaddy on my mum's

side called Looney Bay home, and he was none

other than Blackbeard

himself. And my granddaddy on my dad's side was that ruthless scourge of the sea, Bluebeard. He had a cottage



here. Liked to come for a pillage each summer.

"When the old ones died, my mum and dad took over the family business, see? Then I came along. I was named for my granddads: Captain Black-and-Bluebeard. That's me!"

"I've heard of you, but I always thought those were just stories," said Reese.

"Stories!" roared Black-and-Bluebeard.



"How can they be just stories with what you have written on your shirt? Don't it say Looney Bay? Why, Looney Bay's meant buccaneering and swashbuckling since before the time of dinosaurs! How can you be saying there be no such thing as pirates, when you're practically a pirate yourself?"

"Actually, sir," stammered Reese, "I'm a right wing."

The pirates all stopped. They looked at Reese strangely.