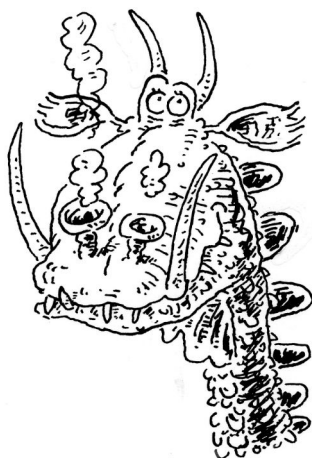


THE
CONJUROR'S COOKBOOK
VOLUME 2
SERPENT SOUP



Jonathan Emmett

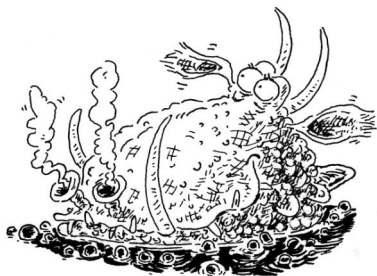
Illustrated by **Colin Paine**



HATCHLING
BOOKS

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Pollapopawibble



Jake and Granny looked on, dumbstruck, as the giant head bobbed up and down alongside them. A pair of deep green eyes the size of grapefruit stared back at them from above a wide, fang-filled, mouth.

It was a sea serpent – you couldn't possibly mistake it for anything else. And if Jake and Granny had been anywhere other than trapped on a table, surrounded by boiling soup, they would have run for their lives!

'Did someone call for help?' hissed the serpent. Its breath was so hot and steamy that Granny almost backed off the table.

'Err ... yes,' stammered Jake. 'We did.'



‘Well,’ snapped the serpent. ‘What’s the problem?’

‘We’re trapped,’ croaked Granny.

‘Can’t you swim?’ hissed the serpent.

‘Not through this,’ explained Jake. ‘It’s too hot!’

‘I suppose you’d better hop on then,’ sighed the serpent. A thick loop of its body rose out of the soup beside them.

Jake and Granny looked at each other uncertainly.

‘What have we got to lose?’ asked Jake.

‘Good point,’ agreed Granny.

Jake picked up the cookbook and they clambered onto the serpent’s back.

‘Where to?’ hissed the serpent impatiently.

‘Erm, upstairs,’ suggested Granny.

They looked out of Granny’s bedroom window onto her garden – or what used to be her garden. It now looked more like a swamp.

The saucepan was pumping out soup at an unbelievable rate; the countryside was flooded for miles around.

‘If this keeps up, it will cover the whole country,’ said Granny.

‘There must be some way to stop it,’ said Jake.

‘Where’s your sponge pudding?’ asked the serpent, who was bobbing around at

the bottom of the stairs.

‘We haven’t got time to eat,’ said Granny.
‘We’ve got to get rid of this soup.’

‘That’s what I meant,’ snapped the serpent. ‘The pudding will soak up the soup. It’s the only thing that will stop it.’

‘Oh,’ said Granny slowly, ‘so you’re talking about a special “sponge pudding”.’

‘That’s what the cookbook must have meant!’ exclaimed Jake, ‘when it said we



should cook some pudding “– just in case.”

‘Don’t tell me you haven’t made any,’
hissed the serpent, rolling its enormous eyes.

‘I’m afraid we haven’t,’ admitted Granny.

‘Brilliant!’ huffed the serpent. ‘I knew you were amateurs, the moment I saw you.’

‘Look!’ exclaimed Jake, pointing at the cookbook. ‘This must be the recipe!’

The book had flipped itself open and turned to a page headed:

SPONGE PUDDING

(For use on sauce swamps, soup floods
and other unnatural disasters)

They read quickly through the recipe.

‘It’s the same as ordinary sponge pudding,’ said Jake. ‘You just make the mixture and steam it in a saucepan.’

‘Except for one ingredient,’ said Granny, ‘quenches. They sound like some sort of fruit?’

‘Have we got any?’ asked Jake.

‘No,’ said Granny. ‘And I wouldn’t know where to get them.’

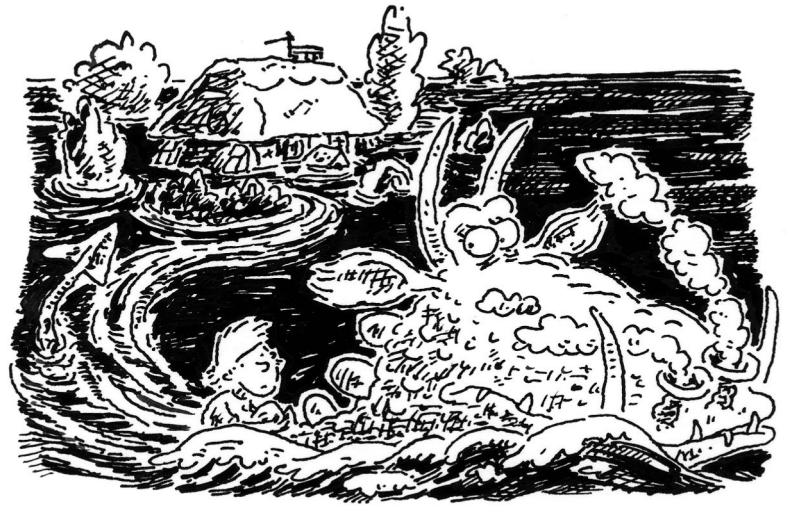
‘I do,’ sighed the serpent wearily. ‘And I suppose I’ll have to take one of you there myself.’

They decided it would make sense if the serpent took Jake to collect the quenches while Granny stayed at home and gathered the rest of the ingredients.

But it wasn’t until after she had waved Jake goodbye that Granny realised that, although the ingredients were in the cottage, she hadn’t a clue how to reach them. They were all downstairs in the flooded kitchen!

‘I can’t just give up,’ thought Granny, as she paced around her bedroom. ‘Jake would never forgive me. There has to be a way ...’

Jake clung tightly to the serpent’s back as



the creature swam swiftly away from the cottage. It was a good job that Granny didn’t have any neighbours; the sight of the strange creature carrying off a small boy would have caused quite a stir.

Jake couldn’t understand the way the serpent behaved. It wasn’t very friendly, but it was giving him a lift.

‘It’s very good of you to help,’ he said. ‘Especially since we’ve only just met.’

‘It’s my job,’ grunted the serpent.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Jake.

‘I’m the *Souperintendent*,’ said the Serpent. ‘It’s my job to look after the soup.’



If someone messes around with it, I have to sort it out.'

'Oh,' said Jake. He felt embarrassed, 'I don't suppose you're too pleased with Granny and me then.'

'What do you think?' snorted the serpent.

'Would it help if I said that we were sorry?'

'Not in the least,' sniffed the serpent.

'Well, we are,' said Jake, who was doing

his best to be friendly. 'My name's Jake, by the way. What's yours?'

'Pollapopawibble,' said the serpent.

'I beg your pardon,' said Jake.

'Pollapopawibble. It's *soup-speak*. It's what my name sounds like when it's spoken in bubbles instead of words.'

'It's a bit of a mouthful,' said Jake. 'Can I call you "Polly" instead?'

'ABSOLUTELY NOT!' snapped the serpent.

They swam on through the flooded landscape in silence. The soup seemed to stretch on forever, covering the fields and woodlands as far as Jake could see. It had stopped bubbling though. In fact, the further they got from Granny's cottage the cooler it became.

'Is it still too hot for you?' asked Pollapopawibble.

Jake leaned over and dipped a finger beneath the surface.

‘No, it’s all right,’ he said, ‘just warm.’

‘Good,’ said the serpent, ‘I can swim much faster underneath.’

‘But I won’t be able to breathe under –’ protested Jake.

He was cut off as Pollapopawibble’s head plunged beneath the soup and Jake was pulled down after it.

