Ross ran swiftly across the sand and splashed through the shallows as the first rays of the sun slid over the horizon. Nobody was on the beach. It was too early for joggers or fishermen. Ross loved to swim at this time, sharing his solitude with no-one.

Ross plunged into the water, enjoying the shock of the cold and began to swim strongly away from the beach. Dad had expressed concern at Ross' early morning swims. He had warned of sharks but Ross had never seen one so he dismissed the warning as just another example of parents' over-protectiveness. For ten more minutes he swam on, then trod water, looking back at the beach now some 200 metres distant.

Ross realised that he was hungry and the prospect of a hearty holiday breakfast of several rashers of bacon and eggs was tempting. He decided to go back.

A few moments later he lifted his head. The beach seemed further away now, not closer! Dipping his head back into the water he stroked strongly. But when he looked toward the beach again, it was even more distant. A rip! That was it. He was caught in a rip! He'd be pulled out further and further until the waves washed him around the headland into the open sea. Ross swam wildly, splashing and walling in his panic, and gasping and spluttering as he swallowed water. He'd been foolish to swim out so far when he didn't know the beach and its currents well.

"Stop it!" A voice seemed to sound in his head. "Don't be stupid. You know what to do. Swim across the rip not against it." Ross forced himself to slow down his rhythm, to calm his breathing. Steadily he swam, not lifting his head to look but concentrating on his strokes. Left arm, right arm, kick, kick...

His shoulders began to ache. His rhythm was ragged; he kept swallowing water. "I can't go on!" he thought. "I'll never get there."

"Just twenty more strokes," the voice in his head insisted. "Just ten more strokes. Just five...."

"I can't!" He raised his head to look at the distant beach and at that moment his trailing feet touched the sand.