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Opening extract from

Cap'n John the (Slightly) Fierce

Written by

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Illustrated by

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John Smith is NOT BORING!



My name is John Smith – the most boring name in the world. Dad says with a name like John Smith no one will EVER make fun of me. Mum says I'm "one in a MILLION". My sister says it makes me the most boring person in history. But do not judge a book by its cover. My life is ANYTHING but boring!



To Lottie-Lou, Daisy-Doo ... and Florence too!

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(SLIGHTLY) FIERCE
by Johnny Smith

SCHOLASTIC

Chapter One

"'Tis I, Cap'n John Smith, the fiercest pirate that ever sailed the seven seas!"

I grab my trusty sword and leap on to the deck of my pirate ship. "What's that, my fine parrot friend sitting on my shoulder? Yes, I quite agree. I AM the most dangerous name in the land..."

I go to work putting my enemies to the sword.



SLASH! PROD! POKE!

"You reckoned without the great John Smith," I roar. "What have you got to say before I send you to the bottom of the deep blue sea?"

"Can I have the cucumber back, please?"

"See how she begs for her cucumber! But I show no mercy. I laugh in the face of such pleading! What's that, my fine parrot friend? You are right! This is not a cucumber but my razor-sharp pirate dagger!"

"It's a cucumber! And that isn't a parrot, it's a tea cosy," shrugs my sister, Hayley. "It belongs on a teapot."

"DO NOT INSULT MY PARROT!"

"And your pirate bandana. . ."

"You mean the headscarf on my head? What of it?"

"You do know they're a pair of my knickers, don't you?" snorts Hayley. "My

dirty knickers?"

"What! Arrrgh!!! Brave Cap'n John Smith, undone by his sister's smelly knickers. . ."

We gather round the kitchen table and start munching our lunch – me, Mum, Hayley and Granddad. Well, Granddad would be munching his lunch if he hadn't lost his dentures. So he's sucking spaghetti through a straw instead.

"Why are you prancing round with a tea cosy on your shoulder and a cucumber in your hand?" says Dad, wandering into the kitchen.

"I'm just getting into the part," I reply.

"What part?" he asks, taking his seat at the table and picking up the newspaper.

"The useless loser part," says Hayley.

There speaks my big sister, the destroyer of dreams!

"The pirate captain," I reply.

"Why do you want to be a pirate?" says Dad.

"Because Hector's having a pirate party," I reply, "and we're all dressing up. I'm going as a brave, dashing, adventurous pirate..."



"How can you be a dashing pirate," sneers Hayley, "when you're whatsischops, the boy with the most boring name in the world?"

"Can I ask you a question, Dad?"

"As long as it doesn't involve money..." says Dad.

"Why did you call me John Smith?"

Dad pokes his head round the side of the newspaper.

"Ask your mother," says Dad.

"Don't blame me," says Mum. "It wasn't my idea."

"Well, whose idea was it?" I murmur. "One of you must have given me my name!"

Mum and Dad look at each other and shrug.

"You were probably given your name by a computer," chuckles Hayley. "Maybe they scanned your face and the computer gave

you the name you deserve."

"Hayley!" says Mum. "Don't listen to her; you're one in a million."

"Too right," says Hayley. "One in a million John Smiths."

There's a knock at the door. Hayley throws her fork on the plate and runs out of the kitchen.

Granddad looks at me and winks.

It's not fair, you know. My big sister gets three middle names – Hayley Mutya Keisha Siobhan Smith – after Mum's favourite pop group at the time Hayley was born.

But I am just plain John Smith.

"One day you'll see," I nod. "Just because I'm John Smith on the outside, it doesn't mean I'm John Smith on the inside. There are big things waiting round the corner for me."

Hayley comes running back into the kitchen.

"Oh my gosh," she shrieks. "I take it all back. Look, John, you're rich, RICH! RICH!"

Hayley drops a leaflet on the table. It's an advert with a made-up customer called John Smith winning a prize raffle for one million pounds. "Oh, my mistake," says Hayley, "maybe you're not rich. I suppose they just wanted a boring, dull, average name to use in the advert. . ."

I step down from the table, throw my dagger in the salad bowl and toss my pirate headscarf in the dirty laundry. The truth is, my big sister – although I HATE to admit it – is right.

My name isn't exactly exciting, is it?

"I'm going up to my room," I sigh.

"Good luck finding your pirate outfit – Captain John the Boring," laughs Hayley.

She's right about that too. I've got nothing

to wear to Hector's party.

"John. . ." Granddad hobbles out of his chair, a limp straw filled with spaghetti bolognese in his fingers. "Help me find my dentures, will you?"