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Opening extract from

Life Stinks!

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Illustrated by

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For Lucy, Theo and Tara
(Team Bently Curtin) – PB

For Clarey, Bonnie and Sonny
(Team Blunt) – FB



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Team Percy

CASTLE
BOMBAST



Sir Percy the Proud



Cedric
Thatchbottom
(Me!)



Patchcoat the Jester



Margaret the Cook

TEAM ROLAND



BLACKSTONE FORT



Sir Roland the Rotten

Walter Warthog



Guards of Blackstone Fort



Chapter One
A Scroll for Breakfast

"Cedric!"

"Yes, Sir Percy?"

"Have you groomed Prancelot?"

"Yes, Sir Percy."

"And polished my armour?"

"Yes, Sir Percy."

"And fluffed up my plumes?"

"Yes, Sir Percy."

"Splendid. Now where's my breakfast?"

"Coming, Sir Percy!"

I entered the bedchamber and placed the breakfast tray on the bedside table. Then I went over to the window and pulled back the thick embroidered curtains.

Sir Percy Piers Peregrine de Bluster de Bombast opened an eye and blinked in the bright sunlight.

"So, what's Margaret made for me this morning?" he said cheerfully.

He sat up in bed and I placed the tray on his lap. "Porridge, Sir Percy."

His face fell at the sight of the lumpy, greenish gloop.





"*Again?*"

"Yes, Sir Percy."

"Thank you, Cedric," he groaned. "That will be all for now. Come back in half an hour and help me dress. Today I'm going for a ride in my new armour – to give it a bit of an airing before the tournament."

"Yes, Sir Percy."

I headed back down to the kitchen for my own breakfast dose of Mouldybun Margaret's porridge.

Yeucchh! I can't blame Sir Percy for being disappointed. It looks EXACTLY like the stuff they were carting away when Sir Percy had the castle moat cleaned last week. Smells like it, too.

Maybe I'd better start at the very beginning. My name is Cedric Thatchbottom and I've been working at Castle Bombast for a month now. I'm Sir Percy's squire, which means one day I'll be a KNIGHT like him and I'll get to do to cool stuff like:

1. Wear ARMOUR



2. Have a SWORD



3. Rescue DAMSELS IN DISTRESS
(Whatever *damsels* are. Some kind of pet?)



4. Defeat an entire army of BADDIES single-handedly and save the kingdom



5. Boss around PEOPLE WHO LAUGH AT MY NAME (and my red hair)



I've wanted to be a knight for as long as I can remember. But you can't be a knight without being a squire first. One day I was out helping my dad (Ethelred Thatchbottom, builder to the gentry) when I spotted a sheet of parchment pinned to a tree:

SQUIRE REQUIRED
to serve celebrated local knight.
No experience necessary.
Apply to Sir Percy P.P. de Bluster de Bombast,
Castle Bombast.

I nagged my mum and dad to let me try out for the job.

"Don't be silly," said Dad. "Only toffs get to be squires and we ain't toffs, Ced."

I nagged them some more and eventually they said there was no harm in trying but I shouldn't get my hopes up.

So I went to see Sir Percy, and to my amazement I got the job! Soon after that I came to live at Castle Bombast to look after Sir Percy and do all his chores.

Sir Percy is always promising to teach me proper knight stuff, but he never seems to get round to it. Maybe he's just too busy being a celebrity. People call him Sir Percy the Proud and he's famous for being the bravest, kindest, cleverest and most handsome knight in the kingdom. It says so in *The Song of Percy*. Sir Percy wrote *The Song of Percy*, so I guess he should know.