

The King of Custard Castle



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Four stories about Custard Castle

Emma Laybourn

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The Thing in the Dungeon

Custard Castle had three hundred dusty rooms, and seven people.



There was the King, the Queen, and Princess Fifi. There was a maid, a wizard, and a cook. There was a ghost, who didn't really count.

And there was Jack.

Jack was the servant-boy. He had lots of different jobs to do.

When Princess Fifi went riding, Jack was the Stable-boy. He liked that job, because he got to groom the horse.

When the Queen mended the bathroom pipes, Jack was the Plumber's Mate. He liked *that* job, because he got to hold the spanners.

When Wizard Watchit was cooking up a spell, Jack was the Wizard's Helper. He liked that job best of all, because he got to stir the cauldron.

But all too often, Jack was the Guard. He had to be the Guard whenever the King was in his treasure room, counting out his money.

Jack hated being the Guard. The Guard had to stand as straight and stiff as a broom-handle. The treasure room was cold and dark, and the King spent far too long in there. He stayed there for *hours*.



“I wish Father would come riding with me,” grumbled Princess Fifi.
“I wish he would help me put up some shelves,” sighed the Queen.
“I wish he would come and play tiddlywinks with me,” said the Wizard. “The ghost’s no good at tiddlywinks.”

But the King was too busy counting his treasure, while Jack stood on guard.

“Fifty-six, fifty-seven,” counted the King one day, piling up his golden guineas. “Fifty-eight, fifty – *what was that?*”

Jack and the King stared at each other. A terrible sound echoed through the castle.

“YEEOWULL!!”

It was a horrible howl: a sinister screech: a ghastly groan. And it came from the dungeon.

Down ran Jack and the King from the treasure room.

Down ran Wizard Watchit from his tower.

Down ran the Queen, and Fifi, and Bella the maid. They all stood at the dungeon door, and listened.

“EYEWLL!!” went the dungeon.

“Is it a prisoner down there?” asked Wizard Watchit, shivering.

The King shook his head. “I haven’t had a prisoner for years.”

“EERGH!!” went the dungeon.

“Rats?” asked the Queen.

“I doubt it,” said the King.

“YAROOWLL!!” went the dungeon.

“Spiders?” wondered Fifi.

“Somehow I don’t think so,” said the King.

“ROARGH!!” went the dungeon.

“Ghosts?” said Bella the maid, with a gulp.

“Ooh! Could be!” said the King. “Someone must go in and find out. Wizard? You’ve got a ghost. You know all about them.”

“My ghost doesn’t make horrible noises!” protested Wizard Watchit.

“Doesn’t matter,” said the King. “This is a job for a wizard. In you go.”

“Sorry, just remembered,” gabbled Wizard Watchit. “I left the cauldron on. I’ll have to go and see to it.” He hurried away to his tower and hid under the bed.

“Maybe this isn’t a job for a Wizard,” said the King. “But it certainly isn’t a job for a King. This is a job for....”

He looked around. The Queen, Fifi, Bella and Jack all looked away.

“....for a Guard,” finished the King.

“Bother!” muttered Jack.

“Guard! Go and search the dungeon,” the King ordered.

“Wait a minute,” said Jack. “I need to get something first.”

Jack ran to the hall and opened the cupboard under the stairs. They kept a small dragon there for lighting fires. Tucking the sleepy dragon under his arm, he returned to the King.

“I’m ready,” he said. “Open the dungeon door!”

Slowly the door creaked open.

The inside of the dungeon was as black as a beetle. It smelt old and cold and damp.

Jack tiptoed inside.

“Fire, please, dragon,” he whispered.

The dragon yawned. A small flame slipped from its mouth, and lit up some of the dungeon; but not the shadowy corners. Jack couldn’t see anything that might have made the horrible noise.

“More fire, please, dragon!” he whispered.

The dragon yawned a little wider. The flame lit up most of the dungeon; but not the furthest, darkest corner.

“Loads of fire please, dragon!”

The dragon yawned still wider. This time, the flame lit up nearly all the dungeon. It almost reached into the furthest corner....

“**YEARRGGH!!**” went the corner. The dragon yelped, jumped out of Jack’s arms, and ran for the door.

Jack was left alone in the dark. Just him and the Thing.

It sounded like a Thing with sharp, sharp claws.

It sounded like a Thing with lots of teeth.

It sounded like a Thing that was about to pounce and chomp right through his neck with just one bite...

Jack gulped. He took a step forward.

“**GEROWWLL!!**”

With a horrible howl, the Thing pounced.

It pounced onto Jack's shoe, and chomped right through his sock with just one bite.

Jack reached down. He felt a fluffy ball sitting on his foot, and picked it up.

The Thing had sharp, sharp claws all right – as sharp as tiny pins. It had lots of teeth – as thin as little needles. But it was no bigger than his fist.



Jack carried the Thing to the door. It looked like a ball of blue fluff, blinking and screwing up its eyes at the light.

He held it out to the King.

“Here you are,” he said.

“*That?*” said the King. “Is that it?”

“**RROARRHH!!**” snarled the Thing. It gnashed its tiny teeth. The King fell over backwards and sat down on the floor.

“Well, don’t just stand there!” he told Jack. “Take it away!”

“Where to?”

“I don’t care,” said the King. “*You’re* the Guard. You get rid of that terrible Thing.”

“Do you want it?” Jack asked the Queen.

“Certainly not,” she said. “I can’t do my plumbing with that noise going on.”

“How about you, Princess?”

“Certainly not,” said Fifi. “It doesn’t match any of my frilly frocks.”

“Bella?”

Bella the maid shook her head. “Not me. I’ve got nowhere to keep it.”

“Bother,” said Jack. He frowned at the Thing, wondering what to do with it. “You look like a Thing for a wizard,” he decided.

So off he went to Wizard Watchit’s tower, carrying the Thing. Every time he passed a sunny window, the Thing screwed up its eyes.

Jack knocked on the Wizard’s door. When no-one answered, he went right in. The Thing tried to hide from the light.

“Wizard Watchit?” said Jack. “I’ve got a Thing for you. What are you doing under the bed?”

“Just dusting,” said the wizard’s voice. The Thing dived out of Jack’s hand, and scuttled into the shadows under the bed.

“Yikes!” yelped the Wizard, leaping up. “It’s after me!”

“It just likes the dark,” said Jack, scooping up the Thing. Its eyes were tightly shut.

“It can’t stay here!” protested Wizard Watchit. “I’ve already got a ghost in my tower. I don’t need a Thing as well!”

“Then what shall I do with it?”

“I don’t know,” said Wizard Watchit. “*You’re the Guard. You decide!*”

“Bother,” muttered Jack.

He carried the Thing back down the stairs, and plodded through the castle.

He passed the treasure room. The door was open. He’d left it open when he ran down to the dungeon in a hurry.

“Oops,” said Jack. “I hope nobody’s stolen the treasure!” He peered into the cold, dark room.

“**WEEEGH!!**” cried the Thing. It scurried into the treasure room, ran to the darkest corner and sat down on a heap of coins.

“Do you like it here?” said Jack.

“**EEEBOOG!!**”

“Try it with the door closed,” suggested Jack. “It’s even darker then.” He shut the door and stood outside, listening.

The Thing was humming happily. “**POOBLE DOOBLE COOBLE CLUNG.**”

Just then, the King came puffing up.

“I never finished counting out my money,” he said. “Stand guard for me, Jack!”

“You’ve got a new guard now,” said Jack.

“Have I? Where?” The King looked round.

“In there.”

The King opened the door.

“**RROARRGH!!**” went the treasure room.

The King closed the door again quickly.

“Jolly good,” he said. “What an excellent guard. I, um, I don’t think I’ll do any more counting just now. I’ll go for a ride with Fifi instead.”

When the King returned from his ride, he went to the treasure room and opened the door a crack...

“**YEROWLL!!**”

“Maybe later,” said the King, and he went to help the Queen put up her shelves.

When the shelves were up, he tiptoed to the treasure room. He opened the door as quietly as he could.

“**OOURRARGH!!**”

“Time for a game of tiddlywinks,” the King decided. “The counting can wait till next week. Or next year.”

The Thing stayed in the treasure room, where it was perfectly happy in the cold and dark. It only howled when people opened the door. So it was very good at keeping thieves away.

It was also very good at keeping the King away. And that made everybody happy....

Especially Jack.

The Dragon under the Stairs

A cruel winter was attacking Custard Castle.

The cold wind whipped all the leaves off the trees, and flung them at the windows. It blew down the chimneys and under the doors. It howled in the corridors and wailed around Wizard Watchit's tower.

Wizard Watchit had no fire. After shivering in his tower for a while, he came downstairs to complain to the King.

"I'm freezing!" he moaned. "Can't Bella come and light the fire in my tower?"

"Certainly not!" snapped the King. "No fires until next month. That's the rule. Firewood costs far too much."

"But I'm freezing too!" cried Princess Fifi.

"So am I!" said the Queen.

"I'm colder than an iceberg!" wailed Jack the servant-boy.

"This castle's like a fridge!" said Bella the maid.

"Rubbish," said the King, who was wearing extra-thick royal underwear underneath his furry robes. "It's not cold at all. You don't need fires. Have a hot drink to warm you up."

"Sorry," said Cook. "There are no hot drinks. All the ovens in the kitchen have gone out. There's no hot anything until we can light them again."

"Oh!" said the King. His face fell. "No hot food at all?"

"There's plenty of strawberry ice-cream," offered the Cook.

"Oh!" said the King again, looking very put out. "Well, in that case, you may light the fires in the kitchen as a special royal favour. Then make me some hot soup. And light the fire in my throne room too!"

"And my bedroom!" added Fifi.

"And my tower!" said the Wizard.

“And the rest of the castle,” ordered the Queen.

“Oh, all right then,” said the King crossly. “Jack! Go and chop the firewood. Bella! Go and fetch the dragon.”

Jack chopped up lots of wood, and put it in the fireplaces ready to be lit.

Bella went to the cupboard under the stairs to fetch the dragon. It was a small, sleepy dragon that they kept for lighting fires.

The dragon was fast asleep. When Bella picked it up, it felt limp and floppy. She tickled the dragon’s tummy to wake it up, but it just snored.



She waggled its tail. Nothing happened.

She shouted “Boo!” in its ear. It didn’t even stir.

Bella carried the snoring dragon to the King and put it down on the floor.

“I can’t wake it up!” she said.

“It’s been like that for days,” said Jack. “I can’t even wake it up to feed it.”

The King poked the dragon in the ribs. It just snored louder.

“What’s wrong with it?” he grumbled.

“It’s hibernating,” said Wizard Watchit.

“It’s never done that before!”

“It’s never been so cold before,” the Wizard groaned.

“Well, how do we wake it?” asked the King.

“You need to warm it up,” said Wizard Watchit.

“But we can’t warm it up until it’s woken up, and lit the fires!”

spluttered the King. “Do a spell to wake it! Quickly!”

“It might not like it,” said the Wizard, looking worried.

“I don’t care! Do it anyway!”

The Wizard shrugged. “If you insist.” He muttered a spell, waving his hands over the dragon’s head.

Suddenly, the dragon’s eyes opened wide. It glared around. It did not look happy.

“I told you it wouldn’t like it,” said the Wizard.

The dragon opened its mouth wide. But it did not breathe out fire. Instead, it showed all its long, sharp teeth, and snapped them at Wizard Watchit. It had never done that before. The Wizard jumped backwards.

“Er, I’m just off to see to some charms,” he said, and he hurried away to his tower.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Pick up the dragon and light the fires!” said the King to Bella.

Bella gazed nervously at the dragon. It had always been a lazy, dozy dragon. She had never seen it so wide awake. She didn’t feel much like picking it up.

She reached towards it, but it snapped its long, sharp teeth at her. Angrily, it snapped its teeth at Jack, and the Queen, and Princess Fifi.

Then it snapped them at the King.

“Stop that!” said the King.

“I bet it’s hungry,” said Jack. “It hasn’t eaten anything for days.”

“Well, take it away and feed it!” said the King. “What does it eat?”

“Meat pie,” said Jack. “It likes steak and kidney best. Come on, dragon! Pie time!”

At that, the dragon pricked up its ears. It followed Jack down to the kitchen. Its sharp claws clattered on the flagstones. It ran around the kitchen, sticking its head in the cold ovens.

“It’s looking for a steak and kidney pie,” explained Jack.

“But I haven’t got any pies!” said Cook. “Not until the ovens are working. Do you think it’ll like strawberry ice-cream?”

The dragon did not like strawberry ice-cream. It spat it out, sneezed, and galloped out of the kitchen in a rage. Bella and Jack ran after it; but whenever they tried to catch it, it turned and snapped its teeth at them.

Then the dragon began to rampage round the castle, hunting for steak and kidney pie.



It hunted in the Queen’s toolbox, and chewed her spanners. It hunted in Princess Fifi’s wardrobe, and chewed her dresses. It hunted under the King’s throne, and chewed his slippers.

It got more and more hungry, and more and more angry. Although Jack and Bella kept following it, they couldn’t stop it.

“What if it decides to eat maid instead of pie?” whispered Bella.

“Or servant boy?” said Jack. “What can we do? It won’t light the fires, or go back to sleep, until it’s had something to eat!”

“And there isn’t a steak and kidney pie anywhere in the castle!”

Suddenly the dragon raised its head. Its nose twitched. It began to waddle swiftly down the corridor.

“Now where’s it going?” asked Bella.

The dragon broke into a run. It ran all the way to the tallest tower – the Wizard’s tower. It clambered eagerly up the stairs and stopped outside the Wizard’s door, panting.

Bella banged on the door. Wizard Watchit opened it, wrapped in a blanket. At once the dragon charged in.

“Help!” cried Wizard Watchit. “What does it want?”

“Steak and kidney pie,” said Jack. “You haven’t got any, have you?”

“As a matter of fact, I have,” declared the Wizard. “I keep one in case of emergencies. It’s on a shelf somewhere...”

He began to look along his shelves, muttering, “Let me see. Toadspawn... ginger biscuits... black beetles... Here we are! Steak and kidney pie. It’s a bit cold.”

He tossed the pie to the dragon. The dragon tried to bite it, but its teeth went *crunk* on the pastry. The pie was frozen solid.

“It can’t eat that!” said Bella in despair. “Now what?”

The dragon took a long, deep breath.

“*Whooh!*” it said. A yellow flame sputtered from its mouth, and nearly set fire to the Wizard’s blanket.

“It’s trying to melt the pie!” cried Jack.

Quickly, Bella put the pie in the fireplace.

“*Whooh!*” went the dragon, again and again. Flames snaked around the pie.

The wood in the fireplace began to crackle and smoke. The pie began to steam and sizzle. The dragon grabbed the pie in its teeth, and gobbled it all up.

Once the dragon had eaten the pie, it looked much happier. It yawned a huge, slow yawn. Its eyelids drooped. It staggered, lay down and fell fast asleep.

Bella picked it up, and carried it downstairs. She put it carefully back inside its cupboard.

“Stay sleepy!” she told the snoring dragon. “I like you better that way!”

Meanwhile, Jack lit a torch at the wizard’s fire. He carried it around Custard Castle, lighting all the other fires. Soon the castle was as warm as toast.

“We mustn’t let the fires go out!” Jack told the King. “Or the dragon might start to hibernate again. We’ll have to keep the castle warm!”

The King grumbled, but he dared not argue.

So all the fires stayed lit, the dragon stayed happy – and Custard Castle stayed snug and warm all through the cruel winter.

The Messy Princess

The sun rose over Custard Castle.

The King and Queen snored in their beds.

Princess Fifi snored in her bed.

Up in his high tower, Wizard Watchit snored over his spell book.

Only Bella was awake.

Bella was the maid. Every day she got up at sunrise. She had to sweep all the three hundred dusty rooms in Custard Castle. Then she had to light all the fires.

Bella opened the cupboard under the stairs. First she took out a long, bristly broom, and tucked it under one arm. That was for sweeping the floors.

Then she took out a small, sleepy dragon, and tucked it under the other arm. *That* was for lighting the fires.

Bella tiptoed through the castle. *SWISH* went the broom, sweeping every dusty corner. *AAAH* went the dragon, yawning fire at every fireplace.

Last of all, Bella came to Princess Fifi's room.

"I hate this room!" she grumbled. "Fifi never puts anything away. Just look at it! How can I sweep in here? There are clothes all over the floor!"

While Princess Fifi snored, Bella picked up all the clothes and put them in the wardrobe.

Then she swept the floor. The dragon lit the fire. At last the room was warm and tidy.

Fifi stretched and woke.

"Good morning!" she trilled.

She took a little golden bell from her bedside table, rang it, and dropped it on the floor.

“Where’s my strawberry juice?” she demanded.

Bella handed her a glass of strawberry juice. Fifi drank it, and dropped the empty glass on the bed.

“Dressing gown!” she sang. She put on her fluffy slippers and danced over to the wardrobe.

“Now, which one shall I wear today?” she pondered, pulling out one gown after another. “The pink velvet? No... The yellow silk? No... The green satin? No, no, no. Ah! *This* one!”

Fifi pulled on a gold lace dressing-gown, and dropped all the others in a messy heap.

She washed her face and threw the towel under the bed. Then she stood at the window to brush her hair.

“Lovely day for roller skating!” she said. She dropped the hair-brush out of the window and took her roller boots down from the shelf. “But first, I need breakfast!” Tossing the roller boots on to the rug, she skipped happily through the door.

Bella ran around the room. She tidied up the bell, the glass, and all the dressing-gowns.

As she bent to pick up the towel, she tripped over a roller boot. THUD went Bella as she sat down on the floor.

“I *hate* this room!” she growled.

* * *

Princess Fifi had a busy day. She had to:

eat breakfast

choose her dress

go roller skating

read her Bumper Book of Princes

eat chocolates

change her dress
play some tennis
and try on all her jewellery.



Bella had a busy day. She had to follow Princess Fifi around the castle, picking up:

toast

dresses

roller boots

the Bumper Book of Princes

chocolate wrappers

more dresses

tennis balls

and all the Princess's jewellery.

By lunch time, Bella was fed up.

"I've had enough!" she said, stamping into the kitchen.

The Cook, Wizard Watchit, and Jack the servant boy were there, eating their lunch. Princess Fifi was eating her lunch upstairs with the King and Queen, and dropping bread rolls on the floor.

“I spend all day tidying up after Fifi!” wailed Bella. “She never puts anything away! What can I do?”

Jack thought about it.

“Pile all her things in a big heap,” he suggested, “and get the dragon to set fire to them.”

“I’d love to!” said Bella. “But I’d get into terrible trouble.”

The Cook thought about it.

“Ask Fifi politely to put her things away,” she said.

“I’ve tried that!” sighed Bella. “It doesn’t work.”

Wizard Watchit thought about it.

“Hmm,” he said. “I have an idea.”

“Do you know a spell that I can use to make her tidy?” asked Bella hopefully.

“Better than that!” said Wizard Watchit. “I’ve got a plan. Listen...”

* * *

The sun rose over Custard Castle.

Princess Fifi stretched and woke.

“Strawberry juice!” she trilled. She reached out for her golden bell, and found—

—a sock.

Fifi sat up in bed. Bella was lighting the fire with the dragon.

“Where’s my bell?” demanded Fifi.

“On the window-sill, of course!” said Bella.

Fifi jumped out of bed, and landed on her hair-brush.

“Ouch! What’s that doing on my rug?” she cried. “Where are my fluffy slippers?”

“In the wash-basin, where they belong,” said Bella.

“What?” Fifi limped over to the basin. “My lovely slippers are all soggy!” she wailed. “And where’s my toothbrush?”

“In the wardrobe, of course,” said Bella. “Where else?”

Fifi threw open the wardrobe. An enormous pile of bread rolls tumbled out.

“Where are all my clothes?” she gasped.

“I threw them out of the window,” answered Bella. “That’s right, isn’t it?”

“No, it isn’t right!” cried Fifi. “It’s as wrong as can be! What’s the matter with you?”

Bella rubbed her head.

“Oh dear!” she said. “I fell over your roller boot yesterday, and banged my head. I must have lost my memory. Doesn’t the toothbrush belong in the wardrobe?”

“No, it does not!” said Fifi. “Watch me!”

She carried the toothbrush over to the basin.

“The toothbrush goes here!” said Fifi. She picked up the wet slippers. “Slippers go under the bed! Jewellery goes in the box – not hanging from the lampshade! And my Bumper Book of Princes should *not* be in the flowerpot!”

Fifi ran around the room, putting everything back in its right place. It took her ages.

“That’s better!” she said at last. Then she looked at the clock.

“I’m late for breakfast!” she wailed. Snatching an armful of dressing-gowns from the cupboard, she put on one and dropped the others on the floor.

Bella picked them up. “I’ll just go and bury these in the garden,” she said.

“No!” screamed Fifi. She grabbed the dressing-gowns from Bella and hung them up again. Then she fled from the room.

* * *

Bella had another busy day. She was putting away all Fifi’s things.
She put:

Fifi’s toast in the bath

her ribbons in the teapot

her Bumper Book of Princes in the dog-kennel

her tennis balls up the chimney

her chocolates in the cupboard under the stairs

her jigsaw in the oven

and her bedtime cocoa in the roller boots.



Princess Fifi had a *very* busy day. She had to hunt down everything that Bella had tidied up.

Her ribbons were nearly as soggy as her toast. Her jigsaw was burnt to a cinder. Her tennis balls were stuck in the chimney. The Bumper Book of Princes was covered in tooth-marks and doggy dribble.

And in the cupboard under the stairs, she found an empty chocolate box and a very happy dragon.

“I’ve had enough!” she wailed, tipping cocoa out of her roller boots.
“I’m exhausted! I’ve spent all day tidying up! Where’s my nightie?”
“In the fish-pond,” answered Bella.
“Oh, no!” The Princess fell on the bed in all her clothes. “Hasn’t your memory come back yet?” she groaned.
“Not yet.”
“I hope it comes back soon!”
“I’m sure it will,” said Bella, “as long as you keep on showing me where everything ought to go. It might just take a few more weeks.”
Princess Fifi didn’t reply. She began to snore.
Bella smiled, and tiptoed out of Fifi’s perfectly tidy room.

The Marvellous Moat

Princess Fifi was reading to the King from her Bumper Book of Princes.

“Prince Peregrine has the finest castle in the land,” she read.

“Hah!” said the King. “I bet it’s not as fine as Custard Castle.”

“His castle has the tallest tower in the land,” read Fifi.

“Hah!” said the King. “I bet it’s not as tall as Wizard Watchit’s tower.”

“Prince Peregrine is very proud of his new moat,” read Princess Fifi.

“It is the most marvellous moat for miles around.”

“Hah!” said the King. “I bet it’s—” He stopped. “Hang on. We don’t have a moat. Why don’t we have a moat?”

“We’ve never had one, dear,” the Queen replied.

“But we can’t let Prince Peregrine get the better of us! We need a moat. I’ll start drawing up plans for one right away.”

“Oh, good!” said the Queen. “I can do the plumbing.”

“Oh, good!” said Fifi. “I can have a fancy boat.”

“And Wizard Watchit can make a drawbridge,” said the King.

So the King drew enormous plans in blue ink for his new moat. Then he hired workmen to dig a wide, deep ditch right around the castle.

The Queen did the plumbing. She built a long pipeline from a nearby stream all the way to the ditch. Water began to pour in and fill it up.

Princess Fifi got a boat. She painted it purple and covered it with ribbons and bows. Before long, there was enough water for her to practise rowing.

The Wizard had no idea how to make a drawbridge. So he got Jack the servant boy to saw up a few planks and put them across the moat.

“Wonderful!” said the King, rubbing his hands. “This is a marvellous moat! The only thing that spoils it is that bridge of yours, Wizard.”

It was not a very good bridge. But the Queen's pipes worked *very* well. Water poured swiftly into the moat. Soon it was completely full.

"That's enough water now," the King said. "You can turn the tap off."

"Tap?" said the Queen. "There isn't a tap."

"What? You didn't make a tap? The moat will flood!" exclaimed the King.

"No, it won't. Just pull the plug out," said the Queen.



"Plug?" yelled the King. "There isn't a plug!"

"What? You didn't make a plug?" the Queen exclaimed.

"Of course I didn't! It's a moat, not a bath-tub!"

"Uh-oh," said the Queen. "Then we're in trouble."

"*Wizard!*" the King bellowed.

Wizard Watchit came running down from his tower.

"There's too much water in the moat," announced the King. "Do something before it floods the castle."

"What shall I do?"

“I don’t know!” the King said. “*You’re* the wizard! You must have a spell for this sort of thing. Off you go and sort it out!”

The Wizard tramped back up the stairs to his tower. He felt very annoyed with the King.

“First he’s rude about my bridge,” he complained to the ghost who lived in his tower, “and then he expects me to empty his moat for him! I don’t know any spells to empty moats. There’s no mention of moats in my spell book.”

“Woo woo woo?” the ghost suggested.

“Yes, I suppose I *could* make one up,” said the Wizard grumpily. He thought for a few seconds. “How about this?”

*“Eye of newt and toad of frog,
It’s like falling off a log.
Custard Castle’s moat of water,
Start behaving like you ought ter.”*

“Woo woo woo,” said the ghost doubtfully.

“What do you mean, that’s awful? It’s good enough for that stupid King.”

And Wizard Watchit went to the window and shouted his new spell at the moat.

The moat began to bubble and froth. Clouds of steam rose from it.

“See?” said Wizard Watchit as the steam cleared. “It’s worked.”

“Woo...” The ghost stared down.

The spell had worked all right. The moat wasn’t full of water any more.

It was full of something thick and gloopy, and as yellow as a dandelion.

It was full of custard.

* * *

The moat did not stop filling up. More and more water poured in through the pipe. As it entered the moat, it turned into thick, gloopy, yellow custard.

“*Watchit!*” yelled the King.

The Wizard pretended not to hear. He stayed up in his tower, well away from the angry King – and the custard.

For soon the moat began to overflow. The custard crept up to the castle walls. Next it crept up to the castle windows. Then the castle began to flood with custard.

This custard did not pour in. It was too thick. It oozed under doors, and flopped through windows in big yellow dollops. The castle was full of the sound of custard plopping and flopping. The floors were covered in a gloopy, blobby custard carpet.

“This is disgusting!” said the King. He was wearing his gumboots, which were full of custard.



He shouted at the servants. “Bella? Sweep up all this custard!”

Bella tried. But the custard stuck to her broom.

“Jack?” cried the King. “Shovel up this custard!”

Jack tried. Shovelling custard was easier than sweeping it. Jack shovelled up a whole wheelbarrow-full of custard.

“Now what shall I do with it?” he asked. “Shall I tip it back in the moat?”

“No!” howled the King. “Take it across the bridge and dump it on the other side.”

So Jack began to push the heavy barrow full of custard on to the bridge.

All at once, the planks cracked. Then they broke in half and fell into the custard moat. They drifted away slowly on the yellow tide.

Jack jumped back onto shore. “Now what?”

“You can use my boat!” cried Princess Fifi. “Hooray! My purple boat will save the day!”

The purple boat did not save the day. It did not like being full of custard. It did not like trying to float on custard.

It did not like it when Fifi rowed through custard. It turned itself upside down and tipped Fifi, Jack and the wheelbarrow into the custard moat.

“Help!” yelled Jack.

“Help!” yelled Fifi. “We can’t swim in custard!”

Bella ran for her broom, and held it out for Fifi to grab. Then she pulled.

With a loud SLURP, Fifi came out of the custard. With a loud BURP, Jack followed.

“Now what?” he asked. “We’re stuck in the castle with no bridge and no boat, and we’re surrounded by custard!”

Fifi licked her hands. “That’s tasty custard,” she said.

The King dipped his finger in to try it. “Very tasty,” he agreed. Then he smiled. “Why, that’s the answer! Easy peasy! All we need to do is eat the custard up.”

So everyone in the castle began to eat the custard.

They had custard for every meal. They ate custard with pasta and custard with potatoes. They ate fried custard and custard salad and custard stew.

Soon the other food ran out. All that was left to eat was custard. Everyone was getting very tired of it.

And no matter how much of it they ate, the moat made more and more.

And more.

* * *

All this time, Wizard Watchit stayed in his tower, where he had plenty of emergency pies.

Then the pies ran out.

“Bother!” said the Wizard. “There’s nothing left to eat.”

“Woo woo?” suggested the ghost.

“But I don’t like custard! I’ll have to go and find some proper food.”

The Wizard put his fork and spoon in his pocket and ran down from his tower. He waded nervously through the custard-filled corridors of the castle. He was worried about meeting the King.

But he saw nobody at all until he reached the kitchen.

He peered in. Everyone was sitting round the table with bowls of custard.

“More custard, anyone?” the Cook was asking. “Do you want some custard gravy on your custard?”

They all groaned and shook their heads.

The hungry Wizard crept away. He went outside to look at the moat. Water was still pouring in and turning into custard.

Wizard Watchit thought for a while.

“I know!” he said. “When someone comes along, I can shout across the moat and tell them to block the pipe.”

He looked for somebody to shout to, but there was nobody there.

The Wizard thought again. Perhaps he could make up another spell?

But he couldn't think of anything that would rhyme with custard, apart from mustard; and he certainly did *not* want to fill the moat with mustard.

“Ear of spider, tail of pig, this custard moat is really big!” he muttered. His stomach was rumbling so much that he couldn't think properly.

“Listen to my empty belly. What I need is cake and jelly!” moaned the Wizard.

Then his eyes widened. “Oops...” he said.

The custard moat began to gurgle. Clouds of steam rose from it. It fizzled and sizzled.

The King came running out. “What's going on?”

“Oh, I just thought I'd try a little spell,” said Wizard Watchit casually.

Together they stared at the moat. Slowly the steam cleared.

Now they could see the banks, still piled high with custard. But the moat was full of something else.

Something bright pink and wobbly. On its shuddering surface sat a broken bridge and a boat made out of sponge cake.

“There you are!” said Wizard Watchit. “You now have the most marvellous moat in all the land.”

“But what is it, Watchit?” gasped the King. “*What did you turn it into?*”

The Wizard took his spoon out of his pocket. “Nothing much,” he said. “Well, just a trifle.”

The End