

PROLOGUE

And enormous bums will conquer the world and complete and utter devarsetation will follow. Giant brown blobs will rain down upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. An evil stench will cover the land. And bums will rule the world again as they did in their glorious prehistoric past.

from *The Book of Bumageddon*, Chapter 3006, Verse 258, the Sir Roger Francis Rectum edition.

CHAPTER 1

BLOB

Zack Freeman looked up and realised that he was about to be squashed by a giant brown blob.

Oh no! he thought. *Not a giant brown . . .*

But that was all he had time to think before the giant brown blob crashed down on top of him—and everybody else—gathered at the Bum-fighting Academy.

Zack, his bum, his parents, Eleanor Sterne, Silas Sterne, the Kicker, the Smacker and fifty of the best and brightest bum-fighting recruits in the world.

All squashed.

All buried.

All completely giant-brown-blobbified.

CHAPTER 2

BLOBBIFIED

It was a sad end to what had been the proudest and happiest morning of Zack Freeman's life.

Not only had Zack just arrived back on Earth after saving the world from a zombie bum invasion and

rescuing his parents from Uranus, but he had also graduated from Silas Sterne's Bum-fighting Academy. In one hand he proudly held his basic bum-fighter's certificate, and in the other a special medal of excellence for his work in the bum-fighting simulator.

Unfortunately, however, none of the challenges Zack had faced so far—either real or simulated—had prepared him for giant-brown-blobbification.

He was way out of his depth.

And sinking fast.

He shut his eyes.

He pinched his nose.

He held his breath.

And then he did . . . well . . . *nothing*.

There was nothing he *could* do.

He could hardly move.

The blob was too thick. And too dark . . . or rather, too brown. Pitch-brown.

He didn't know which way was up.

He didn't know which way was down.

North or south.

East or west.

Zack's mind was racing.

He didn't want to die.

Not yet, anyway.

And especially not inside a giant brown blob.

What if the giant brown blob set hard and became a fossil?

And what if he became a fossil inside the giant brown blob?

And what if one day in the future they dug it up, cracked it open and found him?



He didn't want his body to be put in a glass case and displayed in a museum for schoolchildren to laugh at. 'Eeerggghhh, yuck!' they'd say. 'Blob-boy! Look at the disgusting blob-boy!'

Then again, perhaps that was better than *not* being found and having to spend eternity trapped inside a giant brown blob . . .

Zack shuddered at the thought. With a mighty effort he brought his mind back to the present. He had to stop worrying about what *might* happen in the future and start focusing on what was happening to him *right now*.

And fast.

Zack smiled ruefully as he realised he was still clutching his bum-fighter's certificate. He'd been so proud to receive it, but in this situation a bum-fighter's certificate wasn't even worth the paper it was printed on.

Or was it?

Paper.

The word triggered something inside him—but what? What use was paper?

Suddenly an image of his grandfather flashed into Zack's mind. Percy Freeman—one of the world's first bum-fighters: the Wiper. Armed with only a few rolls of toilet paper and an enormous load of courage, he had wiped some of the deadliest bums on the planet.

Paper.

Wiper.

Even as Zack's oxygen-starved brain was shutting down, the two words forged a fragile, but life-saving, bond in his mind.

Zack knew what he had to do.
He brought the piece of paper up in front of his face.
And started wiping.

CHAPTER 3

WIPE!

Zack wiped.
He wiped hard.

He wiped fast.

He wiped harder and faster than he'd ever wiped before.

He wiped out a clear space around his head, opened his mouth and took a deep breath. Sure, it was bad air, but it was a lot better than *no* air.

Feeling stronger and more hopeful, Zack gripped the certificate with both hands and began the powerful scoop-wipe that he'd learnt at the Academy. At the same time he began to kick his feet. It was hard work, but it allowed him to begin tunnelling slowly through the blob.

He still didn't know where he was going, but at least he was going somewhere.

He'd been tunnelling for only a few minutes when he felt a small soft shape moving in front of him.

Although he couldn't see anything in the pitch-brown, Zack could feel that the shape was in fact a small hand.

Zack recognised it immediately. He reached forwards and pulled the hand—and its owner—into his tunnel.

‘There you are!’ said Zack to his bum. ‘I thought I’d lost you!’

‘Zack?’ it said in a small voice. ‘What happened? Where are we?’

‘A giant brown blob fell out of the sky,’ said Zack. ‘That’s what happened. And we’re trapped inside it.’

‘It wasn’t my fault!’ said Zack’s bum. ‘I didn’t do it! I swear!’

‘Calm down,’ said Zack. ‘I know you didn’t.’

‘Are we going to die?’ said his bum.

‘Not if I can help it,’ said Zack.

‘Great,’ said his bum. ‘So we ARE going to die!’

Zack was beginning to wish that he hadn’t found his bum. He’d forgotten just how annoying it could be.

‘I don’t want to die!’ screamed his bum. ‘I’m too young!’

‘Then stop complaining and DO something!’ said Zack, shaking his bum.

‘What?’ it said.

‘That’s exactly what I’m trying to figure out,’ said Zack. ‘We can keep wiping, but there’s no way of telling where we’re actually going. We could be going round and round inside this blob forever.’

‘Until we die, you mean,’ said his bum.

‘That’s enough!’ said Zack. ‘You’re not helping, you know!’

‘Sorry,’ said his bum.

But deep down Zack wondered if his bum was right.

He’d wiped and wiped and wiped and there was still no sign of a way out.

‘Zack?’ said his bum, in a brighter voice. ‘Remember when we got caught in the crapalanche?’

‘Yes,’ said Zack.

‘We thought we were going to die then, too, didn’t we?’ said his bum. ‘But we didn’t.’

‘Actually, we *did*,’ said Zack gloomily. ‘We went over the Brown River sewagefall. We were crushed to death on the rocks, remember?’

‘Oh yeah,’ said his bum. ‘That’s right . . . but that wasn’t *real*—it was in the bum-fighting simulator. And we only went over the falls because the Kicker accidentally set the difficulty level on the training program too high. And anyway, what about the brown hole? That *was* real and we got sucked into that and didn’t die.’

‘I’m not sure about that,’ said Zack.

‘Not sure about what?’ said his bum. ‘Not sure that the brown hole was real?’

‘No,’ said Zack, ‘I’m not sure that we survived. I think there’s a strong possibility that we died and went to hell . . . *and this is it!*’

‘That’s not funny, Zack,’ said his bum.

‘I’m not trying to be funny,’ said Zack. ‘Even if we do get out, what would be the point? We’ll probably just get squashed by another giant brown blob. I thought that after everything we’ve been through, and everything we’ve done, the Earth would finally be safe. I was wrong. I now see there’s no end to it . . . and there never will be.’



FIGHT!

‘So that’s it?’ said Zack’s bum. ‘You’re giving up?’
‘I’m not giving up,’ said Zack. ‘I’m just accepting reality.’

‘What about your parents?’ said his bum. ‘And Eleanor, and Silas Sterne and the Smacker and the Kicker? You’re just going to abandon them?’

Zack shrugged. ‘I already saved them all,’ he said. ‘Twice! It’s their turn to save me. If they’re alive, that is.’

‘Zack,’ said his bum, ‘do you still have the medal and the certificate they gave you at your graduation?’

‘Yes,’ Zack said.

‘You don’t deserve them,’ said his bum.

‘What do you mean?’ said Zack. ‘I *earned* them.’

‘You really believe that?’ said his bum. ‘You know as well as I do that they only gave them to you because they felt sorry for you.’

‘Shut up,’ said Zack.

‘It’s true!’ said his bum. ‘They all laugh at you behind your back. Face facts, Zack. You’re a total loser. And you always have been. You can’t even control me, your own bum, let alone save the world!’

‘Do you want an atomic power punch?’ said Zack. ‘Because you’re heading the right way to get one.’

‘Oooh, don’t scare me,’ said his bum.

Despite the pitch-brownness, Zack saw red.

Things were bad enough without having to put up with being taunted by a bum. Especially his own. He was going to teach it some respect, even if it was the last thing he did—which, by the way things were looking, it probably would be. He drew back his fist and let fly.

WHAM!

‘Didn’t even hurt!’ said his bum.

Zack atomic-power-punched it again—this time with both fists.

POW!

The force of the punch sent his bum deep into the brown murk of the blob.

‘Call that a double-handed atomic power punch?’ said his bum’s muffled voice. ‘You should be ashamed of yourself. Didn’t they teach you anything at the Bum-fighting Academy?’

Zack launched himself forwards and set upon his bum with a bloodcurdling yell. ‘This is all your fault!’ he screamed.

Zack punched.

Zack smacked.

Zack kicked.

Zack pinched.

Zack punched and smacked and kicked and pinched his bum with all the atomic bum-punching bum-smacking bum-kicking bum-pinching force that he could muster.

With every blow they travelled further and further through the blob.

Zack was still punching and smacking and kicking and pinching a few minutes later when he and his



bum broke through the thick, dried outer crust of the giant brown blob, and rolled onto the ground.

CHAPTER 5
DIG!

Zack lay on the ground blinking against the brightness of the day. He was caked with brown blob-sludge. The stench was awful.

‘Haven’t you two got better things to do than fight at a time like this?’ said a voice.

But before Zack could reply—or even stand up—he felt a cold blast of water hit his body. He rolled around on the ground, helpless against the force of the icy torrent.

Finally, just when Zack felt he couldn’t possibly get any colder or wetter, the water stopped.

As he lay there shivering, he saw a pair of boots step in front of his face. They were covered in sludge from the blob.

‘Well, don’t just lie there!’ said their owner. ‘Get up and give me a hand!’

‘Eleanor?’ said Zack, wiping water from his eyes.

‘No, it’s the Easter bunny!’ said Eleanor. ‘Who do you think?’

‘You’re not going to hose me again, are you?’ said Zack, getting to his knees.



'I will if you don't hurry up,' said Eleanor, still pointing the emergency bum-fighting hose at him. 'Come on! There are people dying in there!'

'But how did *you* get out?' said Zack.

'Anti-giant-brown-blob spray,' said Eleanor, producing a small can from her bum-fighting utility belt. 'I never leave home without it!'

'Nobody told *me* about that,' said Zack.

'You didn't ask,' said Eleanor.

'I didn't even *know* about giant brown blobs!' said Zack.

'Well, you do now,' said Eleanor, waving her hose at the blob in front of them. 'But what you probably *don't* know is that they set hard in less than an hour. We've got to get everybody out before it's too late!'

'He'll be no use,' said Zack's bum, shivering from the same water treatment Zack had got. 'He's hopeless.'

Zack bent down, picked up his bum and cradled it gently in his arms. 'Shhhh,' he said. 'It's okay. I know you just said all those things to get me mad enough to punch our way out of the blob. But you can stop now. We're out!'

'I meant every word, you bum-fighting wannabe!' said his bum, still punch-drunk from the beating.

'We haven't got time for this!' said Eleanor, thrusting a shovel into Zack's hand. 'You can sort this out later. Meanwhile, we have people to save! Including your mother and father!'

Zack stared at the shovel and felt sick. Compared to the blob, the shovel seemed no bigger than a teaspoon.

There was no point even starting.

But he couldn't let his parents die!

Not when he was just getting to *really* know them. He'd always believed that they played in the wind section of a symphony orchestra that toured all over the world. He'd had no idea it was a cover for their real work as top secret bum-fighting agents. And he sure hadn't gone to all the trouble of travelling to Uranus and back to rescue them just to lose them to a stupid brown blob.

Zack attacked the blob with his shovel.

Eleanor blasted the blob with her hose.

But it was tough going.

After ten minutes Zack was exhausted. The blob seemed to be setting harder with every passing moment. He rested on his shovel, panting. The hole he'd made in the blob was pathetically small. 'It's no use,' he said.

'Keep digging!' said Eleanor. 'We have to try!'

'It's impossible,' said Zack.

'Give me one good reason *why*,' said Eleanor.

'How about that one right behind you?' said Zack's bum.

Zack and Eleanor turned around slowly.

And gasped.