

CENTPEDE: He looks as though he's going to faint any second.

LADYBIRD: Oh, my goodness, the poor thing! I do believe he thinks it's *him* that we are wanting to eat!
[*Everyone roars with laughter*]

ALL: Oh, dear, oh dear! What an awful thought!

LADYBIRD: You mustn't be frightened. We wouldn't *dream* of hurting you. You are one of us now, didn't you know that? You are one of the crew. We're all in the same boat.

OLD-GREEN-GRASSHOPPER: We've been waiting for you all day long. We thought you were never going to turn up. I'm glad you made it.

CENTPEDE: So, cheer up, my boy, cheer up! And, meanwhile I wish you'd come over here and give me a hand with these boots. It takes me hours to get them all off by myself.

[*JAMES crosses the room and kneels beside CENTPEDE*]

CENTPEDE: Thank you so much. You are very kind.

JAMES: Well . . . uh . . . you have a lot of boots.

CENTPEDE: I have a lot of legs and a lot of feet. One hundred, to be exact. [*Proudly*] I am a centipede, you know.

EARTHWORM: *There* he goes again! He simply cannot stop telling lies about his legs! He's only got forty-two! The trouble is that most people don't bother to count them. And anyway, there is nothing *marvellous*, you know, Centipede, about having a lot of legs.

CENTPEDE: Poor Earthworm. [*Whispering in JAMES'S ear*] He's blind, you know. He can't see how splendid I look.

EARTHWORM: In my opinion, the *really* marvellous thing is to have no legs at all and to be able to walk just the same.

CENTPEDE: You call that *walking*! You're a *sithener*, that's all you are! You just *sith*er along.

EARTHWORM: I *glide*.

CENTPEDE: You are a slimy beast.

EARTHWORM: I am *not* a slimy beast. I am a useful and much-loved creature. Ask any gardener you like. And as for you . . .

CENTPEDE: I am a *pest*! [*Grimacing proudly and looking round the room for approval*]

LADYBIRD: He is so proud of that, though for the life of me I cannot understand why. Oh . . . please excuse me . . . my name is Ladybird.