

Wisplurkers

Episode 015. Kylie sees the bug

At half past three the school day ended. In the lessons that had taken up the afternoon, Toby had succeeded, when the teachers' backs were turned, in telling the others some of his morning's adventures. He wasn't sure they had been all that interested.

Toby, Matt, Kylie and Lloyd stood at the school gates getting in everyone's way. There was a lot of back slapping and congratulations going on between Matt, Lloyd and some of their other friends.

"We did it," said Lloyd excitedly. "We're both going to play in the school football team."

Matt was just as jubilant, "I always said me and you are good enough if given the chance. Just think Lloyd, first the school team, then a premiership team and then England, and the World Cup."

"*We are the Champions* —," sang the excited pair.

"Oh shut up," Kylie was fed up of hearing about football, and all this self-congratulation was embarrassing.

Matt wasn't going to let his sister spoil his moment. "You should be pleased, now you can cheer on your brother and *your boyfriend*." Kylie went to swing her heavy school bag in his direction, but missed.

Toby was losing patience. Wasn't any one interested in his morning's sleuthing? He'd risked the wrath of Mr Lyon, although he'd managed to dodge him during the afternoon, and would have to dodge his Dad if he was found out.

"About the Grimleys' house," he began.

The three sighed together. Kylie didn't want to hear about this any more than football, and Matt and Lloyd wanted to practice the dribbling along the gutter using an empty cola can.

"Well, if you're not going to take this seriously —," began Toby.

Matt, with a final tackle got control of the can and kicked it to the other side of the road expertly avoiding a passing cyclist. Matt and Lloyd then gave Toby their undivided attention.

"So. You've already said there was nothing in there," said Lloyd.

"Well — there wasn't," answered Toby. "Just a few dirty, smelly clothes left over chairs. No sign of a struggle or anything."

"You didn't see any blood then?" asked Matt.

"Er, well. — No. Not at the house."

He wouldn't tell them about his run-in with Denny Yarby and his friends, or Bernie's bloody finger. He might say something later. Nor had he shown them Malcolm. He was waiting for the right moment.

"Tell me," demanded Kylie in that bossy voice of hers. "Just how did you get inside? I suppose you broke in. You do know breaking and entering is against the law?"

Toby chose to be a little lenient with the truth. "A window was already smashed, and I reached inside and opened the catch."

"— And ripped your sleeve," said Kylie. She never missed anything. "What's your Mum going to say about that Toby Dodd?"

He had no answer to that. He hated the way Kylie Jameson always seem to get the better of him. He'd teach her. Maybe now was the moment to show his friends Malcolm — and especially Kylie.

'Get ready to cover your ears when Miss Know-It-All screams,' he muttered under his breath.

"I did find something else, while I was looking around."

Toby reached into his blazer pocket. "Meet Malcolm."

With a dramatic flourish he sat the bug, just beginning to wake up, on the palm of his hand and instinctively screwed up his eyes against the expected screaming.

Nothing!

Toby opened one eye.

Not a cry or a screech! Nothing!

Matt had taken a step back, and the look on his face was one of horror.

"Yuk," said Lloyd disgusted, "that thing's gross. What is it?"

Toby opened his other eye. Then came the unexpected.

"Wow. That's amazing. Where did you say you found him?" Kylie asked, her voice full of admiration and awe.

"You're not scared?" Toby was gob-smacked. He was so sure Kylie Jameson would have been running down the street, and yelling for her mummy. Isn't that what girls did? Instead she was leaning over his outstretched hand, peering at Malcolm who in turn was watching the girl. To Toby's ultimate irritation, they actually seemed to like one another.

“No. Why should I be scared? That is the most fantastic insect I have ever seen.”

Toby couldn't believe this.

“It's amazing,” continued Kylie sounding as if she knew about everything. “It could be a member of the genus *Scarabaeidae* or dung beetle. The markings are—.”

“What?”

Matt, now recovering from his initial horror, explained “Kylie's interested in insects and things.”

“Mmm. I'm going to be an entomologist,” said Kylie.

“A what?”

Toby thought the world was going mad.

He watched in disbelief as Kylie and Malcolm studied one another.

“For the morons,” Kylie pointedly glanced at Toby, “an entomologist is someone who studies the behaviour and lives of insects.” She flicked back her long hair, “I really must try and track down this species. Can I use your computer Lloyd? There is bound to be something on the Web.”

Lloyd shrugged his shoulders, “Sure.”

“Can we go now —?” asked Kylie her face animated with excitement. “This could be something completely new. A discovery of a new species or one previously thought extinct. This is so exciting.”

“Hold it,” Toby had to put a stop to this now. He'd been the one to find Malcolm and, whatever he was, he was not Kylie Jameson.

There was also the question of revisiting the Grimley house.

“It's just a beetle,” he said dismissively, and then continued before Kylie had a chance to argue. “Anyway I want to see the house again and look for clues —.” He glared at Matt and Lloyd daring them to let him down, “I'm going to deputise you two to come with me. Right now.”

To his amazement Lloyd agreed with a shrug, and Matt, albeit somewhat reluctantly, nodded his head.

Kylie was still bemused by Malcolm and the sudden way he yawned. She watched amazed, as the bug's long warty purple tongue uncurled and shot out of his gaping mouth, then rolled back and disappeared between the rows of small sharp teeth. She suddenly said, “You'll be expecting me to come with you to *that* house. One that *you*, Toby Dodd, have already broken into. A house where *eerie* things have happened. Where two *wrinklies* have mysteriously disappeared—.”

Toby fiercely shook his head. “Not really.” The last thing he wanted was Matt's bossy sister tagging along.

Kylie reached out a hand and gently stroked the top of the beetle's strange body. Malcolm settled down, closed his eyes, and started to babble and croon with delight. “Isn't he just wonderful?” she said. Matt shook his head and Lloyd pulled a face.

Kylie Jameson was too scared to go to the house and anyway Toby was getting fed up with her. He was even more fed up when she suddenly said, “OK then. I will come with you.” It sounded as if she was doing him a big favour, and his heart sank. Why couldn't his pet have taken a bite out of *her* finger?

Lloyd grinned and rolled his eyes, and Matt laughed, “Kylie. What are you like?”

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Wisplurkers. By Maggie C.

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