

Wisplurkers

Episode 030. Transformation

"Well what do we do now?" asked Toby. He'd missed out on breakfast and he was beginning to feel hungry. He thought fleetingly about his parents chasing the blue and black bugs around the kitchen, and wondered if they'd still be going to his Nan's for dinner. If his Mum and Dad had changed their minds because of *their little problems*, he didn't mind. They just might decide to drive to a McDonalds instead.

"I don't think there is anything else we can do," stated Lloyd wisely, as they retrieved their bikes and stood, uncertain what to do next, in the middle of the road.

Lloyd's parents had gone to a Garden Centre to get Mrs Wong some compost and plants for her hanging baskets. Lloyd had been told to stay close to home, and behave himself, until they got back. As if he'd do anything else.

His older brother Simon, due to go to University in the autumn, had gone out soon after to meet some of his friends. He didn't care what Lloyd did, or got up to just as long as he kept out of his way. But, time was ticking on. If Lloyd wasn't home when his parents got back, it might mean no more Granite Warriors for a couple of weeks, as punishment.

Kylie nibbled on her bottom lip as she considered their next move. Their Mum had been so upset. She'd heard her crying most of the night. If only Kylie could bring her some good news about Matt.

"It's got something to do with that old call centre that burnt down," said Toby suddenly knowledgeable.

That's the very thought that had been going through Kylie's mind. Her forehead creased as she considered it, "Right! We'll try there. There might still be something we've missed."

Toby hadn't intended to give her the idea and with his stomach rumbling fiercely, wished he'd used his brain before he spoke. Once Kylie made up her mind there was no stopping her. Before the others could say anything she was cycling down the street, and they had no option but to follow.

What had once been the Telephone Exchange, a tall square building on the edge of town, was now no more than a mass of rubble and charred wood. Even the big, old tree, that had once brushed the side of the building with its branches, was nothing more than a scorched stump. A sign saying 'DANGER! KEEP OUT!' had been secured to a high, mesh fence that now completely surrounded the area.

Kylie, Lloyd and Toby stood astride their bikes in almost the same place as the three boys had months before. But they weren't alone. A man, with his dark hair gelled and flicked at the front, was standing close by peering at what was left of the building. He half turned to face them, and they waited for him to say 'what are you lot doing here?' or 'clear off' or 'do you want me to have words with your parents?' the sort of palaver they expected if they were somewhere they shouldn't be. He said none of these, but he did look stern however, until he spoke. "There was four of you. Where's the other one?"

"My brother Matthew's disappeared," said Kylie fighting hard against the lump that suddenly formed in her throat.

"Disappeared? How?"

"Just like the Grimleys," piped up Toby. "Just left his clothes behind".

There was something in Inspector Ernie Dalrimple's expression that made Lloyd ask. "Is it something to do with what you told us?"

The inspector slowly nodded his head. He stared at the ground as if trying to make up his mind.

"So there really are these things called Wisplurkers?" persisted Lloyd.

"Where do they come from?" Toby butted in. "Are they aliens from outer space? Where's their space ship?" As if a saucer or a rocket could be near by, he stared hopefully around at the open fields and distant hills.

"No they are not aliens," the inspector sighed. He knew he'd have to tell them. "They come from right here." He pointed at the rubble that had once been the old Telephone Exchange.

Lloyd, Toby and Kylie listened as the man explained about the origins of the Wisplurkers, and how they had evolved from trapped voices inside the old disused building. Even Toby managed to contain himself without interrupting, not even once.

"And you think something happened to Matt when we were at that house in Wood Street last Friday?" Lloyd was amazed. This time he didn't think the policeman was spinning them a line.

"I think so."

"But how did these shadow things get from here to Wood Street in the first place?" asked Toby. This was better than aliens from outer space.

"Alf Grimley must have taken them to his house, probably without realising what he was doing."

"And you think he started this fire?" said Lloyd remembering their earlier conversation.

“He did. But it was already too late for him and his wife.”

Toby knew, reluctantly, he had to mention the bus ticket, although he had got it by breaking and entering.

“I — um. I found something when I was looking in the Grimleys’ house —.”

“You’ve been inside,” Inspector Dalrimple raised one eyebrow, but apart from giving Toby a look, he didn’t seem all that bothered. In fact it was as if he already knew Toby had been inside the house. He nodded and a sort of smile lifted the corners of his mouth.

“Ah yes, a wannabee detective. So — what did you find?”

“A bus ticket”, answered Toby deciding not to mention that he found it in the old man’s trouser pocket. That just might be pushing his luck.

Toby went on to tell him the date and time of the ticket’s issue.

The inspector was thoughtful. “Interesting. Where is this ticket now?”

“It got screwed up, so I chucked it away. So that means —,” said Toby with more confidence, and just to put this policeman right on a few things, “— the Grimleys haven’t been murdered, or their bodies buried somewhere — .”

“I never said they had,” said the inspector sharply.

“Where are they, then?” asked Lloyd. “The Grimleys. They’re not here, so where are they now?”

“I suppose they could be anywhere,” Dalrimple added philosophically. “Or nowhere”.

“What does *that* mean?” asked Kylie who had been listening very carefully. “What about my brother?”

“Your brother will be OK — I think.” Inspector Ernie Dalrimple sighed and rubbed his forehead with his finger tips. “This is what happened. Matthew — that’s his name?” Kylie nodded. “Matthew was looking in through the broken window of the Grimleys’ house the other day. You all were. But I noticed Matthew stayed at the window longer than any of you. One of the Yelloweye Wisplurkers, and I can imagine it was Myers, must have attached himself to your brother and was taken back to your home. I don’t suppose anyone noticed how many shadows Matthew had after you left the house?”

They shook their heads.

“No? Well I think if you had, you might have seen he had two or even more.”

Dalrimple asked. “Did he complain of feeling tired or dizzy? Did he seem different or was he acting strange?”

“Matt’s always a bit strange,” said Toby grinning. He was the other side of Lloyd, so out of Kylie’s pinching range.

Kylie glared at him but said, “Yes. He went to bed very early and Mum thought he was sickening for something.”

“Then the transformation was starting to take place.”

“Transformation?” Kylie was horrified. “What’s that?”

“If the Wisplurker was attached to Matthew, or Matthew’s shadow, it would start to drain him of his energy. And if the creature took your brother’s shadow to eat, then without it, Matthew would slowly disappear — .”

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Wisplurkers. By Maggie C.

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