

## Wisplurkers

### Episode 034. Pandemonium

"Where have you been?" asked Jeff Dodd. "No don't tell me. Just come on and help your mother and me load up the car."

Toby had arrived back at the house to, what could only be described as, pandemonium.

"Where are we going?" asked Toby as he stood his bike against the house wall and followed his father inside. His mother was struggling with a couple of cases down the stairs. She looked hot and flustered, and bizarre. She was wearing a thin summer dress and sandals. On her head, with designer shades, were the furry ear muffs she usually kept for their winter skiing holidays. It was then that Toby noticed the high pitched screeching and jabbering that seemed to fill every corner of their big house.

"The blithers are everywhere," complained his Dad. "There's at least ten in the kitchen and your mother has just found three in the bathroom, or should I say they found her when she was having a shower. I think it was her screeches that set them off."

"Help Mummy with the cases, darling," instructed Angela Dodd. "That's right, take them to the car."

Toby said something but of course she didn't hear him.

"What? I can't hear you."

Toby dragged the cases to the boot of the Merc, where his Dad piled them on top of an assortment of boxes, carrier bags and even more cases.

"Dad, are we going on holiday?"

Wow this was great! A surprise holiday at mid term.

"No son, not a holiday exactly. Your mother has decided we must get some one in to deal with ---," his voice dropped to a hissed whisper, "the infestation. The odd looking cockroaches. She's left a message on Jones Services answer phone. So, hopefully they can do something in the next couple of days. Meanwhile we're going to stop with your Nan ---."

Oh no! Carrots for breakfast, dinner and supper! Yuk!

"Dad do we have to --- ? I mean, couldn't we ---?"

"Now don't argue. We'll be fine for a few days. I know it'll be a bit squashed at your Nan's, but ---."

Toby was running back into the house.

"Toby --- what? Toby --- ?" But Toby ignored his Dad. He'd just remembered something. Malcolm. If Jim Jones and Ted Harris came to--- to --- do whatever it was they did to get rid of the bugs, then that would mean his pet ---. Oh poor Malcolm.

He raced up the stairs and to his bedroom, the general hubbub didn't bother him. He must rescue Malcolm before the exterminators came. He pulled open the doors to his wardrobe and his heart nearly stopped. It was empty of most of his clothes, and his smelly old trainers were gone. One of them was Malcolm's bed.

Toby raced back downstairs.

"Mum. Mum." But of course Mum, who was fussing about in the lounge, didn't hear.

"Dad. Dad." Jeff Dodd, who'd been ramming more cases into the boot, jumped at the cry and banged his head on the open lid.

"For crying out loud, Toby," he rubbed the red, bald bit on the top of his head. "What now?"

"What's happened to my trainers? The ones in the bottom of my wardrobe?"

"They're there." Jeff pointed to a carrier bag, balanced awkwardly on top of a box. "Why you need to keep those old things after we bought you a new pair just last week, beats me."

Toby waited until his father went back inside the house and carefully opened the neck of the carrier bag, then peered into the right trainer. Malcolm the Mutterbug opened one of its bulbous eyes, closed it again and continued its snoring, and muttering. There didn't seem to be any tasty crisps or pizza, so it might as well go back to sleep. Toby breathed a sigh of relief that Malcolm was OK.

Eventually, when they were sure they'd got everything they'd need for a few days away, they climbed in the car and Mr Dodd manoeuvred the car out of their driveway, and into the road.

"Dad," asked Toby from the rear seat. "Have you heard of the Wisplurkers, the Dull, and Brack the Most Feared Redeye from the Dark Echo?"

"What's it going to cost me?" asked his Dad with a resigned sigh.

Mrs Dodd, who by now had removed her ear muffs, turned round in the passenger seat. "Toby. It's not another one of those computer games from Mr Wong's is it?"

She swivelled back in her seat facing forward. "I do think they are a waste of money. You soon tire of them and want the next, and you have so many games already."

"No it's not a game." Toby thought it most unfair. Sometimes his parents could be so not cool.

“The Wisplurkers are real, and they came from the old call centre. You know the one that got fired — you know? There’s the Yelloweye, they are meant to be quite stupid, but they eat human shadows. Then there’s the Redeye and they’re not stupid, and they kill all the Yelloweye Wisplurkers. They live in dark corners and they’re scared of the Dull and Brack. He’s the Redeye leader.” He tried to explain.

Toby’s Mum whispered loudly to her husband, “What an imagination. Take’s after your Great-Uncle Archibald, the relative no one mentions — you know.”

His Dad peered at him through the driving mirror, narrowing his eyes.

“Toby, what are you talking about? You haven’t been sniffing something you shouldn’t, have you?”

Toby shook his head with exasperation. How could these be his parents?

“No Dad. Of course not. It’s the truth. Inspector Dalrimple was telling us all about them, me, Matt and Lloydee. Matt’s disappeared because of the Wisplurkers.”

“Stop. Stop, Toby”, his mother looked aghast. “Where do you get such strange ideas?”

“They’re not strange —,” Toby tried, but it was no good.

“I blame all these films they show on telly. Some of them are enough to give you the heebie-jeebies —,” said Mr Dodd.

“And when a child is as sensitive as our darling Toby, they can do such terrible harm. We are going to have to check what sort of things he’s watching from now on, Jeff.”

“Mmm. I agree.”

Is was as if he wasn’t there.

“Mum — Dad.”

“Look, Toby”, his Dad had on that voice that meant he didn’t-want-to-hear-another-word-on-the-subject. “You are not having it, whatever it is. We spend enough money on your latest must-haves.”

“But Dad. I —.”

“That’s enough, son. No more computer games.”

“It’s not a game.”

“I think somebody has been having you and your friends on. This inspector, I suppose he was a police inspector. He probably spun you a yarn to get you and your friends out of his hair.”

“I hope you checked his warrant card, I’ll not have you talking to strangers, what have I told you about that?” Mum added.

“Policemen are busy people, Toby. Anyway, as for Matt Jameson disappearing, his mother phoned us the other night. She thinks he may have gone to stay with his Dad who’s living in London now, and he’ll be back in time for school tomorrow. So let’s not hear any more of your fancy tales”.

Toby knew this was wrong. He knew Matt hadn’t gone to his Dad’s, he’d have said something, wouldn’t he? Toby shrugged and sat back in the seat. Parents! It was no good telling them anything important.

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Wisplurkers. By Maggie C.

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