

BATTLE BUGS

THE TURTLE INVASION



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SCHOLASTIC INC.

With special thanks to Adrian Bott

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FLINT AND FIRE

Max Darwin strode through the forest as if he were back on Bug Island. The trees weren't quite as big, and his friends were human instead of giant talking bugs, but the feeling of being in the outdoors was just the same.

They were hiking on a woodland trail, heading toward the Boy Scout hut where

they would spend the night. It wasn't far from Max's home, but it still felt like an adventure.

Up ahead, two of Max's fellow Scouts were singing as they marched in line. Suddenly one of them, Danny Grey, let out a yell.

"Whoa!" he cried as he stumbled over something on the ground. "What is that thing?"

"Max will know," called Chris Hollands. "Hey, Max! What is this? Some kind of a bug nest?"

Max hurried to see what they had found. In his path was a large brown mound, bulging up from the path like a little mountain. Danny's sneaker had made a deep mark in its side.

“Oh, that’s bugs’ work all right,” said Max, fascinated.

“What kind of bugs?” Chris asked.

“I think it might be ants.” Max bent down to take a closer look. He picked up a twig and prodded the mound carefully. Danny and Chris leaned in, too.

A moment later, both boys jumped back with a yell. A stream of scarlet ants came pouring out of the mound, flowing like lava down the side of a volcano.

“Not just any ants,” Max gasped. “Fire ants! We need to leave these guys alone.”

“Why?” Danny asked. “What are they going to do?”

“*Sting us,*” Max said. “They’re called fire ants for a reason. They’ve got a lot of venom

in those little bodies, and it hurts a lot. Trust me, I know.”

Danny held up his hands. “Okay, I believe you! Come on, let’s catch up with the others. I don’t want to get left behind.”

Together they hurried to join the other Scouts, who were gathered up ahead outside the hut. They took their places sitting on log seats around the empty fire pit.

“Okay, guys,” called the Scoutmaster. “What I’m about to show you is one of the most important techniques you’ll ever learn, especially when it comes to survival in the wild.”

“How to find the nearest burger place?” Danny joked.

“Better than that. You’re going to learn how to start a fire without matches. There are lots of different ways, but we’re going to start with good old-fashioned flint and tinder.”

The Scoutmaster directed them to gather up flints and dry grass from the forest floor. Max excitedly made a heap of grass and piled up flints alongside it. The Scoutmaster handed out pieces of char cloth, which was specially preburned linen. “Nothing better for turning a spark to a flame,” he insisted.

Then, under the Scoutmaster’s careful supervision, the boys tried to strike sparks using their steel penknives and the flints. Some of the boys managed it right away,

and rewarding wisps of smoke began to rise from their grass piles. Max, however, couldn't make a single spark.

The Scoutmaster frowned down at Max as he scraped and scratched away with his flint and steel. Only one measly spark popped out, and it pinged off into the undergrowth, where it fizzled and died.

"I can't seem to get the hang of it," Max grumbled.

"Hmm." The Scoutmaster frowned. "Maybe try a different way. What about the burning glass?"

"Burning glass?" Max asked, confused.

"You use a magnifying glass to focus the sun's rays. It makes a hot spot, and if you're lucky, you can blow it alight once it starts

to smolder.” The Scoutmaster patted his pockets. “Now, where did I put that magnifying glass of mine . . . ?”

“Don’t worry. I’ve got one!” Max’s magnifying glass had come with *The Complete Encyclopedia of Arthropods*, his magical book that was the gateway to Bug Island. The book was also an amazing store of bug knowledge. He pulled his backpack open and fished around inside.

“Uh-oh,” the Scoutmaster said, peering in. “Looks like you’ve left your flashlight on, Max. You’ll run down the batteries that way.”

“Flashlight?” Max blinked, confused.

“Look. Something’s shining away in there . . .”

Max looked down into his backpack, which was lighting up like fireworks on the Fourth of July. But it wasn't a flashlight that was glowing in there. It was the pages of his bug encyclopedia!

The Battle Bugs of Bug Island are sending me a message, he thought frantically. They must need me!

"I'll be right back," he told the surprised Scoutmaster, snatching up his backpack. "I think I left something in the Scout hut . . ."

Safely indoors, he tugged the encyclopedia from his bag. He took the magnifying glass from its pocket and quickly turned the pages until he found the one he was looking for. He laid the encyclopedia open



in front of him, showing the map of Bug Island.

He held the magnifying glass over the map and looked through it. The landscape changed before his eyes, turning from the color of ancient paper to the rich, vibrant green of grass. The island stood out in 3-D, from the cliffs to the bay, with a great stretch of rainforest in the middle.

Suddenly, Max felt a familiar force snatch him off his feet. The room around him seemed to swell and swirl. He went tumbling down into the book, heading into the map that was no longer a map, but the breathtaking reality that was Bug Island.