

**867 words**

## **BUGS**

Bugs. Some hate them, some hurt them and some even scream at the sight of them, but Casper loved these creatures in a most unusual way.

It was Monday and Casper was heading to the dinner hall for lunch - which he hated the most in school - with his head drooped down. Life was overwhelming for Casper. He had just moved in with a foster family and started a new school. Now he was being targeted relentlessly by some nasty boys. He nibbled a limp sandwich in silence as the boys looked at him and laughed with hand gestures pointed his way. Will this ever change?

With pace he sped outside before he heard anymore or even worse a bottle tossed his way. He walked through the playground, across the football pitch and into his secret hideout which defined happiness for Casper entirely. It was a fabulous spot for finding old treasures such as Pokémon cards or old coins, but the insects were the best of all. He would spend lunchtimes watching them craft structures of chewed up mud and soil. Most of the time, he was so intrigued with the magic unfolding that he lost track of time and had to rush back to class. But today was very different indeed. A large football landed in his quiet sanctuary, followed by the footsteps of Jack – the most horrible kid in school.

“So this is where you’ve been hiding!” he snarled, calling his friends over who crowded around Casper with beady-eyed amusement. Casper felt anxious, his heart thudding in the way it did when he was back at home with his dad.

Suddenly, a large spider crawled over Casper’s arm like a baby over its mother. Jack’s eyes darted to it and, before Casper could stop him, he plunged at Casper in an attempt to grab it. He dodged out the way just in time and Jack fell into a heap of mud filled with failure. His horrible friends roared with laughter at the sight of their leader. Anger engulfing him, Jack immediately jumped up and, before Casper could stop him, he had the spider in the palm of his hand.

“Now guys on the count of three – 1....2...3!” screeched Jack, aggressively. Boom! Bang! Pow! One by one, the gang stomp on the helpless creature. Casper felt himself begin to weep since he thought there was nothing in the universe that could make his day any worse. Like a mysterious illusion, Casper was in his old racing car bed. “Alright boy, go to bed now or no breakfast tomorrow and don’t even think about saying but!” boomed his dad, his eyes narrowed and a fiery red colour at his cheeks. But soon Casper questioned if he was asleep or not because he felt he was weeping, just like he was with the horrific boys again.

In a few minutes he was back but on the teacher's sofa, the bullies staring with annoyed expressions on their faces. "You're lucky you dozed off or you would be at the doctors by now," whispered Jack.

"Helen is outside, ready to pick you up," stated Mr Smith with a smooth American accent. Still feeling drowsy, Casper stumbled over to his new foster mum quite hopelessly.

"Hi Casper," said Helen softly, a glint of hope in her heart. Casper looked down, sadly.

"Can we go to Trevaylor Woods to calm me down? Please?" he asked, a sudden force beginning to control him. Trevaylor Woods was his absolute favourite place. "Alright sweetie but only for half an hour or so," she replied.

He didn't want to tell her about his day or anything important because he simply couldn't trust her. Probably because his own parents had let him down so badly.

Casper was roughly half a mile to the woods when he spotted a treehouse that he hadn't noticed before. It stood tall and wide over the woods sprinkling its glistening glitter over the nature. Casper looked but never interacted with it, like an ant wanting to challenge a spider. The trees beckoned over the surrounding area, its vines slivered through the air in a symmetrical pattern while the plants swayed in the breeze. A perfect line uncovered revealing a long forgotten mini jungle below.

Casper gazed at the pure magic surrounding him as a sweep of purple particles washed over him. The following situation was truly a sight to behold for those particular people who trusts their instincts and see wonder. Thousands and maybe millions of creatures emerged from their rest into broad daylight: lizards, ants, spiders and even stick insects surrounded him in a perfect sphere. Casper's mouth widened while his eyes were fixed on the unimaginable sight unfolding near his feet. His legs loosened and he crashed onto the floor letting the bugs crawl on him. Fantastically the bugs were building harmony in his soul so he lay and enjoyed the once in a lifetime experience. A familiar hum strolled into his path and Casper never doubted who that was. A kind hand reached out to him and his message was loud and clear. He looked up at his new Mum and life felt somehow brighter.