

# **BATTLE BUGS**

**THE BUTTERFLY REBELLION**



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**SCHOLASTIC INC.**

## With special thanks to Adrian Bott

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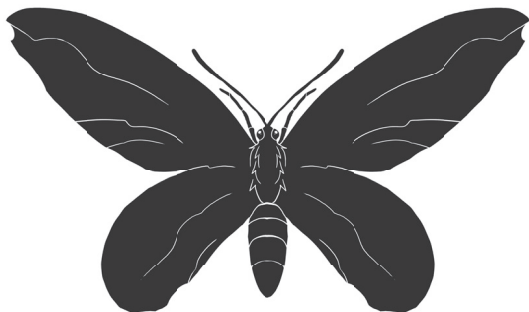
ISBN 978-0-545-94515-8

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 16 17 18 19 20

Printed in the U.S.A. 40

First printing 2016

Book design by Phil Falco and Ellen Duda



## **EARTHWORM WARNING**

“Okay, you greedy birds,” Max Darwin said as he pulled the roll of netting over to the blueberry plot. “Let’s see you get through this!”

The three birds sitting on top of Grandpa Mike’s shed stared down at him. There was a look in their beady black eyes that he didn’t like one bit.

“They’re just normal birds,” he told himself, shuddering. “Hungry birds that want to eat Grandpa’s juicy berries, that’s all.”

Max knew there was no need to be anxious around creatures that were so much smaller than him. Yet, ever since a flock of vermilion flycatchers had nearly eaten him alive on Bug Island, he’d always felt uneasy around birds.

He unrolled a long piece of the plastic netting and pulled it all the way over the tops of the blueberry bushes. Next, he worked his way around the edges, pegging the net into place.

Grandpa Mike’s garden had been a magical place for Max for as long as he could remember. His earliest memory was of

reaching out for a strawberry, gleaming like a jewel in the sunshine, and seeing a magnificent green insect standing on top of it like a guardian. Ever since, he'd been fascinated by bugs and all things creepy-crawly.

“That should do it,” he said, glancing up at the shed. No greedy bird was going to get its beak on his grandpa’s precious blueberries now.

Just then, a delicious smell wafted over from the nearby house. Max’s mouth watered at the thought of the meal to come. Collard greens, cornbread, macaroni and cheese, bacon . . . all cooked up like only Grandpa Mike could.

As if on cue, his grandpa’s face appeared at the window. “Food’s on the table for any

hardworking young man that wants to come and get it!” he called.

Max moved fast. He pushed in the last of the pegs, stomped them down with his foot, and sprinted back toward the house. Inside, the spread on the table made him grin. He settled in by the window so he could look out at the garden, grabbed his fork, and waited for Grandpa Mike to join him.

“Dig in, Maxwell. You’ve earned it,” his grandfather said, sitting down.

Max grinned, loaded up a huge forkful of mac and cheese, and devoured it. Soon, he was completely stuffed.

After lunch, as they were clearing the table, Max peered out at the garden and up

to the shed. *Sorry, my feathered friends,* he thought. *You're going hungry today.*

What he saw made his eyes go wide. The birds weren't going hungry at all. Instead, they were swooping down and attacking the netting, ripping at it with their beaks and plucking the berries through the holes. *And* they looked pretty smug about it, too.

Anger overtook him and he ran outside, waving his arms wildly.

“Max, come back. We'll double up the netting after my nap!”

Max ignored his grandfather's words. He shouted at the birds and they flew up, squawking rudely at him. They frantically flapped their way back onto the shed, giving

him a look that said, “We’ll be back for more just as soon as you turn your back.”

Max drooped down and stared at his feet, breathing hard. All his work was for nothing. Even the worms seemed to be laughing at him. They were sitting up and jiggling around.

*Wait, what?*

He took a closer look. Earthworms were poking up from the ground, waving their pink bodies as if they were trying to get Max’s attention.

“Bug Island,” Max whispered. “They must need me over there, now!”

Panic gripped him as he tried to remember where he’d left his magic book. *The Complete Encyclopedia of Arthropods* wasn’t





just a bug reference guide; it was the gateway to a magical world. Once inside, Max would shrink down to bug size and join his friends, a group of intelligent talking bugs. As human adviser to the bug forces, he'd helped out many times in their war against the reptiles of Reptile Island.

He wracked his brain. *When did I use it last?*

Suddenly, he had it. It was when he was looking up a spider of some sort . . . a spider among the timbers of Grandpa Mike's shed!

He stared hard at the birds perched on the roof as he threw the shed door open. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll be coming back for you!"

He pulled the door closed behind him and dashed to the encyclopedia that lay on the workbench. It was already open to the map of Bug Island, as if it had been waiting for him, and the pages were lighting up the dark shed with their misty golden glow.

Max took the all-important magnifying glass out of his pocket and drew closer. He held the magnifying glass over the map and in an instant was snatched off his feet. The call was a powerful one this time.

*Must be important*, he thought.

He whirled around, becoming smaller and smaller, as he was pulled into Bug Island once again . . .