

The Grickles and the Big Rain
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They're not grubs, and they're not pickles. They're not beans and they're not pebbles. They're Grickles! A Grickle looks like all kinds of things and it looks like nothing you've ever seen before. It can bounce like a rubber ball but it's not one. It's as colourful as a lollypop, but you can't eat it. There are big Grickles and little Grickles. Some Grickles are fat, other Grickles are thin. They're forever coming and going but you can never tell where from or where to...

(Aeroplane, Jump, Bouncy Body, Arm, Head, Grickle Flip, Some have got ears like this, butterfly)

(Once upon a time there was a meadow.
In the middle of that meadow lived seven Grickles...)

(Lilwed, Zoz, Firdle, Titus, Hilda, Jello, Bela)

The Grickles and the Big Rain

The day started like any other day. The Grickles were lying and lazing around on top of their mound. Of course, this is how they like to spend their time the most: lazing around, then doing a bit of jumping, and then lazing around again. Some folks reckon that it's not such a wonderful way to spend your time but Grickles think that it most definitely is.

The only problem was that, on this particular morning, a billowing black cloud blocked out the sky like an enormous ugly bed blanket!

"It's going to rain," Bela announced to the others.

"Oh no it's not!" the others shrugged.

"You'll see!" Bela nodded.

"Ooh, laadidaa!" the others chuckled.

Well, Bela was right enough. Big drops of wet rain soon started to fall from the sky. Then they fell faster... And before long it felt like so someone had opened a thousand taps somewhere above the black clouds!

Zoz, Lilwed, Titus, Hilda, Jello, Bela and Firdle all took cover in their burrows and watched the rain as puddles appeared and grew slowly bigger on the wet meadow.

"It's bound to stop soon," they all thought, hoping for the best.

But unfortunately that didn't happen. The rain had absolutely no intention of stopping anytime soon and the puddles soon became pools.

The meadow was starting to look more like a lake and the Grickles' mound much more like an island in the middle...

"What'll happen to us now?" the Grickles asked each other in wide-eyed wonder.

And they had good reason to be worried! The water grew higher and higher around their mound. First it filled Bela's burrow. Then it flooded Zoz's and Firdle's! And then – oh no! – it flowed into poor Hilda's little home! Only three Grickle burrows were left dry and they belonged to Titus, Jello and Lilwed.

"How will we ever fit into just three burrows?" the others all asked Zoz, who was the largest of the lot.

They tried to imagine what it would be like and all agreed that it wouldn't be so much fun. Okay, well it might be slightly fun...

That was, of course, until the water poured into Titus and Jello's holes that afternoon.

"Lucky for you that you furrowed your burrow at the top of the mound!" the other Grickles said to Lilwed.

By then there was only a very small space left on top of the mound. The bottom of Zoz's trousers started to soak water up...

They all produced their practical pocket brollies. Hilda's was lilac with blue stripes, Lilwed's was pink with red spots, Titus's had yellow strips, Zoz's was green with pink blobs, Bela's was brown tartan, Jello's was blue and crimson, and Firdle's – well his was all kinds of colours all mixed up. And that's how they all stood shivering on top of the mound.

"I don't think we'll be able to stay on our marvellous mound for much longer," Hilda sighed.

"We need to find somewhere much drier than this!"

"Oh deary deary!" Firdle moaned. "But none of us can swim!"

"No need!" Titus told them as he pointed to the rising water. "We're going to row!"

And, sure enough, they saw all kinds of boat-like objects being washed towards them on the waves.

Each and every Grickle managed to find the perfect boat.

And, even though it took him longer than the rest, so did Firdle!

The Grickles all set sail. They waved a sad farewell to their sinking mound and began to row with whatever they held in their hands. When they glanced around, they realised that they weren't on their own.

All the animals in the meadow had been forced to do the same.

(Chockie)

"Where are you guys going?" shouted an elderly but friendly-faced water rat with a colourful magic mushroom slumbering in the back end of his rowing boat.

“We’re off to find ourselves a brand-new mound!” Titus shouted back. “Our old one got completely flooded out!”

“I don’t want to disappoint you, but there aren’t any more mounds in the meadow!” the water rat informed them. “Come and help me pull the plug out instead!”

The Grickles just stared back at the rat in silence.

“When the meadow fills up with water, the only thing to do is to pull the plug out and then the water flows away in half a jiffy!” the old water rat told them.

“That’s all there is to it! Just like a bathtub!”

(cloud, rain, plug, water, water)

It did sound rather strange!

“Do you think that rat’s ever seen a bath before?” the others asked Lilwed in a mixture of whispers.

“He doesn’t look like the sort who washes that often!”

“Whether he has or he hasn’t, we haven’t got another option: we’ve got to go with him!”

Titus told them. And so that is what they did.

The water rat rowed first to the right and then to the left. He rowed so quickly that the Grickles could hardly keep up with him.

(I’ve got no idea where we are!)

“Plug ahoy!” the water rat exclaimed. “It looks like we’re very nearly there!”

“And now what?” Firdle asked.

“What do you think? You’re going to pull the plug out!” the water rat told them. “The strongest one needs to take hold of the chain and then the others have to help him.”

They all looked over at Zoz.

“And what will you do?” Jello asked, turning towards the rat.

“I’ll give instructions. This is going to take brains as well as brawn. I’ll count to three!”

(This is the plug)

“One, two, three!” the water rat counted. The Grickles pulled with all their might.

The plug came flying out with the very first pull and the Grickles all flew out of their little boats.

“Help! We’re going to drown!” Firdle yelled. But he soon stopped when he realised that he could touch the ground.

The last drops of rainwater gurgled off down the plughole.

“We’re saved!” the Grickles cheered.

They could hardly wait to see their mound again.

So they said a quick goodbye to the water rat and started their soggy walk back home.

By the time they arrived, they were covered in mud. They were muddy Grickles but they were happy Grickles!

“It looks like we’ve got some cleaning up to do!” Hilda said when she took a good look around from the top of the mound.

And, as if it had heard her, the sun poked its nose out from behind the retreating rain clouds.

The Grickles quickly brought all their things out to dry. Bela brought his moth-eaten ties out, Zoz brought out his special pillows stuffed with sunflower seeds, and Lilwed spread her fan out decorated with lots of lovely jelly beans.

Hilda produced a selection of plastic flowers that were all funny colours, Titus laid out his large collection of tram ticket, Jello showed up with an odd-shaped box that he’d been keeping in case he needed to keep something special in it, and Firdle just stood and dangled a single stripy sock because that was all he had.

Then they all stood in the sun and waited for their possessions to dry.

Then they all decided to lie around on the mound to warm their bodies through with sunshine.

“Everything’s just like it was this morning, but somehow different,” Lilwed declared.

“And we’ve been for a boat ride in the meantime,” Firdle added.

“And done quite a lot besides,” Zoz mumbled.

And that was so true that the others didn’t say another word all afternoon.

Real Trees Never Snore!

They hold the World Hide and Seek Day every Wednesday in the massive meadow. Of course, only on the Wednesdays when everyone feels like it.

(ready or not, here I come!

May 28 Wednesday

Book

No one’s hiding here!)

It just so happened that this was one of those Wednesdays. And, to top things off, it was a lovely spring day – not too hot and not too cold for a super session of hide and seek.

“I’ll count to ten and then I’ll come looking for you!” Jello told the six other Grickles, because it was his turn to seek.

Zoz, Titus, Lilwed, Hilda, Firdle and Bela all quickly set off to find a hiding place.

Jello closed his eyes and started to count.

he shouted.

Zoz quickly hid himself deep in a pink pancake bush.

(is Zoz hiding somewhere here?)

... Titus found a place to hide in the sugars-spindle grass.

(Hi, Titus!)

Lilwed took cover under a meadow marshmallow plant...

(Look, Lilwed's hiding over there!)

... while Hilda pretended to be a wild aubergine.

(Isn't that Hilda down there?)

Firdle tried as hard as he could to vanish in a herd of pipe worms.

(I never knew Firdle was friends with the pipe worms.)

The only one left was poor Bela, who stood all mixed and muddled up in the middle of the meadow.

"Where should I hide? Where should I hide?" he thought to himself.

"What would you say I looked like the most?!" he asked a legged snail that was just skipping past.

"Now, let's think for a minute," the snail said as it gave him a good looking at. "You look a lot like an old dried-out tree to me!"

"You could have come up with something a bit kinder," Bela sighed. "But thanks for your help!"

The snail sidled off to a common clothes-peg plant that was packed with fruit. And Bela started to think what he could do to make himself look even more like an old tree.

He had three ideas.

(I'm a tree)

After quite a bit of thinking, he decided to go for idea number two, and he set off to search for a clump of trees. *"If I'm clever enough, Jello will never find me here,"* he thought to himself. Then he tried his best to look like one of the trees in the thicket he'd found.

"Eight!" Jello crowed.

"I can't stand Wednesdays!" a magic mushroom shouted that had been reading a book until then. "All this noise gives me a terrible headache!"

"Nine and ten!" Jello quickly stopped counting, because he really didn't feel like arguing with a grumpy mushroom. "Ready or not, here I come!"

And with that he set off to find his hiding friends.

It wasn't very hard. First he found Lilwed, then Zoz, then Titus and Hilda. He found Firdle last. That only left Bela.

(Found you!
Found you!
Found you!
Found you!
Found you!)

"Being a tree can be really tiring!" Bela thought to himself as he stood as still as he could. He was starting to get pins and needles. He gave a big yawn and then – unusually for him – he fell fast asleep.

He dreamt that he was a real tree covered in lots of lush green leaves. A Cheshire squirrel lived in a hole in his trunk and an old stubble spider span a wobbly web between his braches.

His twisted roots provided a shady home for a fluffentuff while a band of brindle ants made the most of his knobby bark. He felt like a very big building with lots of... things living in it...

If it was too sunny, he made shade for his tree-dwellers...

... and if it started to rain, the meadow residents took shelter under his leafy bows...

Then one day a blue-feathered yoodle bird decided to nest in his upper branches. The unfortunate thing about yoodles, whatever the colour, is that they like to yoodle "Quack! Quack!" all day long. Now that's what eventually woke Bela from his slumber!

He was very surprised when he saw all the others.

They were standing all around him and all shouted out together:

"Found you!"

"What a shame," a sleepy Bela told them. "I was just getting used to being a real tree. It felt a bit funny but it was nice!"

"Real trees never snore!" Titus told him. "But the sound of your snoring shook the meadow for miles!"

On the way home, Bela told the rest of the Grickles all about the Cheddar squirrel, the stubble spider, the fluffentuff and the yoodle bird with its blue feathers.

"Maybe it would be much more interesting playing hide and seek in our sleep!" Jello said.

"Then I could even be a read aubergine!" Hilda dreamed.

"I think we should give it a go right away," Zoz yawned.

They were all pretty tired and so they all agreed. Thankfully they had just got back to their mound and so they all slumped down on the mossy mound.

“Whose turn is it to seek?” Lilwed asked.

“Whoever falls asleep first!” Titus told her, and quickly closed his drowsy eyes. The others all did the same in quick succession. I don’t suppose I need to tell you that all the Grickles were sound asleep in seconds. Then the sun went and hid behind a cloud. It hid and came out again, hid and came out again, and hid and came out again until the World Hide and Seek Day came to a quiet end...

(the end)

(If a tree dreams that it’s a Grickle, doesn’t it snore then either?)

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