

## Small Things.

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Character List

JACK

BRANSON

GORDON

50W:

JACK'S MOTHER

TEACHER

BRANSON'S MATE

N/S:

SCHOOL CHILDREN

BOYS

MATES

1                   EXT                   CANBERRA PARK / BUSHLAND                   AFTERNOON  
JACK

A leaf falls from the tree tops to the ground - thickly covered with similar leaves in autumn colours. It lands before a spectacular beetle crawling among the autumn foliage.

Insert: Beetle struggling to climb on to fallen leaf.

SFX: Footsteps that crackle the dry autumn leaves (as though someone is approaching).

A small pair of feet in sandals walk over the covering of leaves. They stop before the beetle.

The feet belong to JACK, a small boy of about 7 years, who crouches down to examine the beetle. He carefully picks it up and holds it up to his face to look at it closely ...and smiles (clearly a good find).

Out on beetle in JACK'S palm.

2    INT                                   KITCHEN - JACK'S HOUSE                                   MORNING

JACK: JACK'S MOTHER

Kitchen bench. Sunlight on the spectacular beetle inside a plastic bug catcher. Nearby pile of books: *The Adventures of Bug man*, *101 Australian Insects*, *Grade 2 - Maths is fun* (or similar).

JACK is at the kitchen bench in school uniform preparing sandwiches for lunch. He struggles to untangle plastic wrap.

JACK'S MOTHER enters wearing a work suit with stockings and no shoes. She smiles and raises an eyebrow to JACK.

JACK'S MOTHER

Making your lunch again...?

JACK'S MOTHER gives JACK a small hug from behind. JACK flattens the piece of plastic to place a sandwich on top...

JACK'S MOTHER

You're a real help to mummy.

...JACK cuts the sandwich in two and wrapping it in plastic. JACK'S MOTHER looks over JACK's shoulder to bread and Choc-Hazlenut Spread on bench.

JACK'S MOTHER

...eating a lot of that lately, aren't you?

JACK'S MOTHER watches as JACK jumps down from the bench to take out the beetle and carefully puts it in his zip pocket with a lettuce leaf.

JACK takes a chocolate bar and apple to put in his school bag with the sandwich.

3                    EXT                    SCHOOL GROUNDS                    MORNING

JACK: BRANSON: SCHOOL CHILDREN N/S

SCHOOL CHILDREN are arrive at the school grounds. JACK sits alone on a corner bench near a clock in the school grounds. JACK looks at the clock.

Insert: clock with time reading around 8.45.

JACK looks about then puts beetle back in his pocket.

JACK looks down and watches ants on the concrete move in their different formations on the ground. One ant carries a breadcrumb on its back.

JACK'S POV: School shoes appear, flatten ants and breadcrumb, scabbed and grubby legs. Larger boy, BRANSON, towers over smaller JACK.

JACK meets BRANSON'S gaze and quickly turns to search through bag. JACK pulls out sandwich and quickly gives it to BRANSON.

BRANSON unwraps the sandwich, throwing its wrap to the ground.

BRANSON

So where's your beetle, weirdo?

JACK

...don't have it.

BRANSON

Sure you don't...

BRANSON takes JACK'S bag and turns it upside down to empty its contents. A pencil box breaks open on hitting the ground. Books, an apple, chocolate bar, pencils are spilt over the concrete. BRANSON picks out the apple and chocolate bar and puts them in his bag.

SFX: School bell.

BRANSON takes a large bite into the sandwich, and walks away and eating it. He joins other SCHOOL CHILDREN who are now entering the school building.

JACK is on his hands and knees on the concrete, hurriedly gathering books and pencils.

4                    INT                    CLASSROOM                    MORNING

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JACK: BRANSON: TEACHER: GORDON: SCHOOL CHILDREN N/S

TEACHER sits against her desk with pen and clipboard in hand. She faces a class of SCHOOL CHILDREN (of similar age to JACK) who sit at desks.

GORDON has cream on his face as he stuffs it with cream bun. He is hit with a chocolate wrapper (the same wrapper from JACK's bar) from behind by BRANSON when TEACHER is not looking.

GORDON, annoyed, tries to turn in his chair to look back, but it's too much of a task so he continues eating. BRANSON and a couple of other SCHOOL CHILDREN snigger.

TEACHER

Jack...

TEACHER looks among the students in the class.

TEACHER

Jack Webber...

JACK enters, flushed red cheeks, out of breath. TEACHER sighs.

TEACHER (to JACK)

I've warned you already about lateness...

JACK passes TEACHER's desk to take a seat in the class. In passing, he notices the apple on TEACHER's desk that BRANSON had taken from his bag.

JACK sits down - a look from BRANSON.

TEACHER

...Jack this time you're on clean up.

BRANSON sticks his tongue out at JACK and sniggers. TEACHER moves to stand over GORDON who is still busy eating his cream bun. Busted - TEACHER takes remainder of cream bun from GORDON.

TEACHER

Gordon..., you can join Mr Webber...

GORDON slumps into his chair. As TEACHER turns back, more paper, wrappers, scraps are thrown at GORDON from behind. BRANSON puffs up his cheeks.

GORDON (to BRANSON)

Eat vomit, Branson...

JACK looks to GORDON, he appears surprised by GORDON's confident response to BRANSON.



JACK

No thanks.

GORDON

Used to get Choc Spread sandwiches...`til Branson  
flogged `em...

GORDON looks at spaghetti.

GORDON

He don't like spaghetti but.

JACK shakes his head a little in dismay and continues to  
watch his beetle.

GORDON

That's an ace beetle - you enter the races?

JACK

Nah...

GORDON

Y'should... show Branson a thing or two...

JACK

I dunno ...he usually nicks my beetles.

GORDON

Not if you beat him, I bet.

JACK looks to GORDON, then down to beetle.

6                      EXT                      PLAYGROUND                      AFTERNOON

JACK: GORDON: BRANSON: BOYS: SCHOOL CHILDREN N/S

SCHOOL CHILDREN play outside while JACK and GORDON meander around benches carrying plastic bags half filled with rubbish.

As Gordon scans the ground for rubbish, JACK wonders along a bench a little distracted by details of a nearby tree (gazing for insects).

INSERT: treetop branches.

GORDON finds a dusty lollypop on the ground nearby. About to put it in the bag, he stops to inspect it, brushes it, and pops it into his mouth.

SFX: roar from group of BOYS at the race patch.

JACK turns his gaze to look towards the patch. He goes to sit on a bench facing the patch.

JACK'S POV: A group of about 10 BOYS, BRANSON among them, are huddled around a dirt clearing in a corner of the playgrounds.

Obviously hearing the noises from the patch, GORDON moves to join JACK on the bench looking towards the patch.

JACK

He took my best stag beetle last week.

GORDON takes lollypop from mouth and shakes his head, a sympathetic smile to JACK.

GORDON

They good racers?

JACK (smiles)

Nah...they're big and ugly...but not real fast.

JACK'S POV: In the playground there is more commotion among the group of BOYS huddled outside. BRANSON appears from the huddle, rising from the group, obviously victorious.

The BOYS begins to disperse. 2-3 BOYS walk with BRANSON. One of them slaps BRANSON on the back. They smile.

JACK looks to beetle, then to GORDON. Hesitates, then...

JACK

Wanna come over to my place today...?

GORDON (clearly pleased)

Sure...!

GORDON drops/tosses lollypop to the ground.

7 INT JACK'S ROOM AFTERNOON

JACK: GORDON

Small spider web woven from the roof to the top of a large hanging mobile. The mobile has large wooden locusts that appear to follow smaller wooden bees as the mobile turns gently.

Walls are covered with posters of insects (both colored photos and scientific anatomic diagrams) and superhero *Bug man*. Shelves in the room are covered with containers housing insects, caterpillars, and greenery, each with scientific name labels. Microscope and bug man comics are on a desk, insect books fill surrounding shelves.

JACK and GORDON enter.

GORDON (looking around the room)

*Wicked...!*

GORDON explores the room, peering into containers.

JACK puts his beetle and leaf in a glass box that has the most spectacular greenery and is clearly the largest in the room.

GORDON looks in a container with maggot-like grubs, squirming in a large glob of festering brown Choc-Hazlenut Spread-like substance.

GORDON

*Cooorr...looks like Choc Spread...!*

GORDON looks up close and reads label on container.

GORDON

*Scara...ba...e...ie...d...*

JACK smiles.

JACK

*Scarabaeidae larvae...in excrementum...*

GORDON (clearly not having paid much attention) lifts up container lid for a closer. He quickly shuts it and fans the air in front of his nose.

JACK

...dung beetle maggots...in worm shit.

GORDON responds with a funny face, the two boys laugh.

Jump cut:

JACK and GORDON are sitting, both looking closely at JACK'S prize beetle that sits in the middle of the desk.

JACK

...been training him to move when I blow. Look...

JACK blows gently on beetle. Beetle moves slightly but not much.

JACK (gently to beetle)

...Come on... come on...

JACK blows at beetle again. Again, no great response from the beetle.

JACK

Well, it works sometimes...

GORDON blows hard at the beetle and it flies across to the edge of the desk.

JACK (smiling)

...hey...!

JACK goes to collect the beetle from the end of the desk to put it back in the centre.

GORDON

I think he'll be right for tomorrow.

JACK is a bit taken aback by the thought.

JACK (unsure)

Tomorrow...?!

GORDON puts his arm around JACK.

GORDON

Bransy-pants and his stag snail ain't got buckleys chance.

JACK looking to GORDON. Gaining confidence with his mate's encouragement, he adopts a more positive and self-assured tone...

JACK (determined smile)

Yeah...

8            INT            CLASSROOM            MORNING

JACK: GORDON: BRANSON: TEACHER: SCHOOL CHILDREN N/S

SCHOOL CHILDREN enter classroom and move to sit at desks.  
JACK sits at a desk with his beetle and GORDON.

BRANSON appears before JACK and GORDON with large thorny stag beetle on his shoulder.

BRANSON

...Heard you're planning on racing today, girls.

JACK looks at BRANSON and stag beetle, opens his mouth to speak, but then looks to GORDON.

GORDON

Eat shit, Branson. You're going down.

BRANSON moves up close to intimidate JACK, with an intense look, eye-to-eye.

BRANSON (to JACK's face)

Yeah,...right after *weirdo-bug* ...*eats my dust*.

BRANSON stares down JACK for another moment before returning to his desk where he and his MATES talk between themselves. They look to JACK and snigger.

JACK looks at his beetle, he shields it from BRANSON.

9                    EXT                    SCHOOL GROUNDS                    AFTERNOON

JACK: GORDON

JACK and GORDON walk together briskly. JACK carries beetle.

10                    EXT                    SCHOOL GROUNDS                    AFTERNOON

JACK: GORDON: BRANSON: BRANSON'S MATE: BOYS N/S: SCHOOL CHILDREN N/S

BRANSON is among a group of about 10 BOYS gathered at the beetle racing area. JACK and GORDON arrive, BRANSON noting their arrival.

Jump cut:

JACK, BRANSON, 3-4 other BOYS line up their beetles. Other BOYS huddle around the dirt area to watch.

The race starts - they're off. Cheering from the BOYS.

GORDON, first with a front-row view of the race, is pushed to the back by larger BOYS who now form a tightly gathered group.

Through most of the race, GORDON struggles to join JACK in the thick of the action, but is able to catch only glimpses of the race through dusty pairs of legs and over shoulders of the increasingly rowdy group of BOYS..

JACK and BRANSON'S' beetles out front, BRANSON'S takes the lead. Sniggers from BRANSON.

JACK'S beetle picks up the pace and the two beetles are neck-and-neck. Then JACK'S beetle takes the lead.

BRANSON (clearly threatened by potential loss) shoves JACK who falls hard on to the race track.

In on: JACK'S face in the dirt, looking to his beetle.

JACK'S beetle stops.

JACK (softly)

Come on... come on...

BRANSON'S beetle catches up and passes JACK'S beetle.

With all the breath he can muster, JACK blows to the beetle. And again - but only a twitch from beetle.

BRANSON notices JACK blowing at the beetle, and kicks dust into JACK'S face.

JACK, squinting with dust in his eyes, gives one more breath - all that he has left.

JACK's beetle begins to move forward. Gaining speed, it takes the lead. Louder cheers as it nears the finish...

BRANSON squashes JACK's beetle just before finishing. Twisting his foot on the spot.

SFX: School bell.

GORDON, seeing what happened, finally manages to push through the crowd of BOYS (now starting to disperse) to get to JACK, who is still on the ground.

One of the BOYS, BRANSON'S MATE, bumps against GORDON, almost tripping over JACK, as he passes with BRANSON.

BRANSON'S MATE

Move it, losers...

BRANSON (to JACK, mimicking sympathy, obviously insincere)

Too bad *weirdo*... your *widdle bee-dle* was just a slow piece of shit...

BRANSON'S MATE

Yeah, *bug* shit...heh heh heh.

BRANSON (looks to JACK)

Yeah...*Bug* shit...

BRANSON laughs with BRANSON'S MATE and some surrounding BOYS as they leave to join SCHOOL CHILDREN entering the school building.

GORDON (softly)

...Jack...?

JACK lies still in the dirt looking at his dead beetle.

GORDON

Sorry mate...I'm so sorry.

JACK is holding back tears. GORDON puts an arm around JACK.

GORDON

We just can't beat him...

JACK covers the dead beetle with his hand - closes it to a fist. His eyes squeeze shut for a moment.

JACK's eyes open. A new determination.

11            EXT            SCHOOL GROUNDS            MORNING

JACK: BRANSON: GORDON: MATES SCHOOL CHILDREN N/S

SCHOOL CHILDREN arrive. JACK and GORDON sit together on the outside school bench (similar set up to scene 3). BRANSON, flanked by MATES, fronts up, obviously demanding lunch from JACK. JACK stands up to give lunch to BRANSON.

BRANSON stares JACK back to the seat, while unwrapping the sandwich and chuckling with his MATES (who stand nearby).

SFX: School bell.

JACK and GORDON pack up to leave the bench when BRANSON returns with his mates and takes another large bite from the sandwich in his hand. He speaks with his mouthful.

BRANSON

These are good Webber...

BRANSON leans in to intimidate JACK...who looks blankly at BRANSON.

BRANSON

...make me two for tomorrow.

JACK'S POV: BRANSON walks away joking with his MATES.

JACK and GORDON exchange looks - they smile.

JACK

Wanna go to my place?

GORDON

Yeah, got any...

JACK holds up Choc-Hazlenut Spread jar - half empty -  
with maggot-infested brown stuff.

JACK

*Chocspreadae larvae excrementum...?*

GORDON (smiles)

Yeah, that shit.

Out on JACK'S grin.