



**HIGHLY COMMENDED 2022: CATEGORY 8-13 YEARS: EVE AYLOTT**

## **The Adventure of Stagitha Bristi**

“Missing Prince from Tingle Ant Colony,” said an intrigued Stagitha Bristi, the Stag beetle detective. He was reading the newspaper in Insect Ville when he heard a knock at his front door. When he opened it, he saw a worried-looking ant queen of Tingle Ant Colony.

“Stagitha Bristi, Prince Barney is missing! He might have got lost and the King and I need your help!”

“Certainly, Queen Isabella. When did you last see him?” asked Stagitha.

“Before ant school,” the ant queen, Queen Isabella, replied.

“I’m on it!” Stagitha cried. With that, he grabbed his magnifying glass and ran out of the door.

Stagitha had been running for about two minutes when he saw an empty crisp packet laying in the long grass.

“A human has been here,” he muttered, struggling to pick up the packet.

With his Super Stag-strength, he threw it into the nearest litter bin.

“Yeah!” he shouted. Stagitha loved cleaning up rubbish to help the environment.

He looked to the floor with his magnifying glass pressed closely to his eye. "Footprints!" he said, jubilantly. The footprints he'd found were ant footprints and they looked like Prince Barney's! Stagitha dropped to the ground and followed the trail. He got so carried away, Stagitha stepped into a muddy puddle which, to him, was like a thick, boggy swamp.

"Oh *great*," he groaned, sarcastically, "what now?"

After about half a minute, Stagitha started to hear a human coming his way! He wailed with horror and his heart pounded in his chest. His legs were stuck!

Soon, a young girl with blonde hair came into view. Her big feet crushed huge stalks of grass and nearly Stagitha, but he used all his Super Stag-strength to push his way out of the bog.

"Phew!" he stuttered, a little shaken up. But Stagitha Bristi is the world's best beetle detective and never gives up!

The girl took another path. Stagitha tutted, sadly, when he saw that the girl had dropped a sweet wrapper and was just in time to chuck the wrapper into her rucksack.

"Yes!" he beamed.

After a while, Stagitha stopped.

"Super senses! Hearing!"

He used his Super-hearing to listen out for noises.

To his great triumph, he heard the grasses straight ahead of him rustling. When he had galloped over, Stagitha leaned over the grass.

"Oh!" Using his magnifying glass, Stagitha saw that there were some of the same footprints he had been following earlier.

The ant with the footprints Stagitha had been following was close. So close that Stagitha could sense it and started running to find the ant!

He was running so fast that he could not stop himself and ended up diving head-first into a big puddle (which, to him, was like a lake.) Luckily for him, his feet still touched the bottom, and his head came above the top so he could breathe. From where he was standing, he scanned all three paths around him and saw that the footprints were carrying on down the path on his Left.

This time, the track stopped and so did the insect...

Prince Barney was stuck underneath a bottle top!

Using all the Super Stag-strength he had restored from earlier, Stagitha punched the bottle top off Prince Barney.

“Stagitha Bristi, thank you so much for saving me like that! You are my hero!” gasped the little ant.

Stagitha nodded. “I think it’s best you take the Inny-bus from now on, Barney,” he said.

Then, he took Barney’s hand and led him back towards his home, the Tingle Ant Colony Palace.

When the ant queen saw Prince Barney, she squealed with delight and happiness.

“He was stuck under a bottle top,” Stagitha explained.

“*What?!*” cried Queen Isabella. Because the ants like her keep their colonies so tidy, they cannot believe that humans litter.

“It’s best to keep an eye on those humans,” Stagitha added, “this will be happening increasingly now as humans do not care for our habitat or the environment.”

Back at home, Stagitha was sitting, sipping tea when there was another knock at his door.

When he opened it, he saw a panicked ladybird.

“Stagitha Bristi, I need your help!” she whimpered.

“You can count on me!” smiled Stagiitha, feeling determined.

He grabbed his magnifying glass and ran out of his front door, as ready as... well, as ready as Stagitha Bristi, World’s best beetle detective, always is and always will be.

**THE END**