

The Insect Lab

*The Story of the Oil Beetle*

By Sarah Hancock

Deep amongst the grasslands  
Where the bluebells and cornflowers grow  
There sits a top secret laboratory  
Which only a few creatures know.

The lab is small in size  
The walls constructed with soil  
And the only creature allowed inside  
Is the beetle who makes oil.

Working in the lab is serious business  
Each beetle with an important role  
Some are in charge of brewing toxins  
Whilst others head out on patrol.

Some are given secret missions  
Others are sent to spy  
A few train the strength of the baby larvae  
Ready for a flower stalk climb.

All these beetles within the lab  
Are working with one thing in mind  
To keep the species safe and growing  
And protect their oil beetle kind.

The alarm sound echoes across the lab  
It's time for the day to begin  
The scientist beetles grab their white coats  
And scurry to the oil toxin bins.

Here they brew and bubble away  
Ensuring the substance is strong  
Carefully pouring the chemicals  
Scribbling notes as they go along.

This precious oil will soon be used  
As a protective superpower  
To keep the beetles safe from predators  
And the chance of being devoured.

When leaving the lab at any time  
The beetles apply a few specks  
Dripping it onto their pointy antennae  
Their legs, their joints and necks.

Now protected by super oil  
These insects are ready for flight  
If anything messes with beetle kind  
They'll be ready to put up a fight.

Grabbing high vis jackets  
Are those with a serious role  
Each day they venture out of the lab  
And head off on wildflower patrol.

Marching in an orderly fashion  
These beetles must wade through the grass  
Counting the flowers as they go  
Sticking together and moving fast.

On their return back to the lab  
They place the tally on display  
The number of flowers must always be high  
To ensure these beetles can stay.

Whilst on patrol, the beetles note  
Other insects they may see  
But in particular, pay attention  
To the black and yellow striped bee.

Across the lab, a whistle blows  
Beetle bootcamp has begun  
The baby larvae wriggle and writhe  
In preparation for some fun.

Weights are curled, lifted and held  
Exercises back to back  
Counting and shouting to lift heavier  
No time for any slack.

Although very young and small in size  
These larvae must get into shape  
Building their muscles to top tier strength  
For a mission they're yet to face.

When the time is right, these beetle young  
Will turn themselves into spies  
Secretly climbing aboard a bee  
And flying solo through the skies.

These baby spies must remain still  
Static, quiet and calm  
For if the bees discover their presence  
It will raise a frenzied alarm.

The mission is for lots of spies  
To secretly enter bee nests  
Once situated in the right location  
It's up to them to do the rest.

Each baby spy must try and sneak  
Some pollen or nectar at least  
Then staying hidden, must use their findings  
To gauge and eat and feast.

For months they lie in situ  
Keeping track of the sweet nectar stores  
Then when bigger and stronger again  
They break out through the bee nest doors.

Once laying their own future larvae spies  
To the lab they will return  
The babies enrolled into beetle bootcamp  
And revealing all they have learnt.

The lab is alive with oil beetles  
Each playing their own beetle role  
Bubbling toxins, gaining strength  
Heading out on wildflower patrols.

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