

The Prickwillow Papers – Season 1 Episode 2

“A Bit of Excitement” by Maddy Searle

SCENE 1

Theme Music

Quill scribbling.

SYLDA: (V.O.) Twenty-eighth of Bud’s Bloom, in the year of Our Lady fifteen thirty-seven.

Hello, diary. How’s it going? Still a bundle of parchment tied together with string? Good. Things have been... weird since Squirm moved in. Privacy is out of the question, of course, apart from when she’s asleep. And even then, I get a funny feeling she’s still listening. I’m writing this the old fashioned way, no magic, because I’m worried she’ll overhear. It feels good to write it down, at least, because I can’t tell anyone that I have a fay living in my room. I promised I’d keep it a secret, and I can’t go back on that promise.

But whenever my parents knock on the door, I feel like I’m having a heart attack. I’ve set up a blanket for Squirm near the window, so she can pop behind the curtains at a moment’s notice.

She may not be able to fly anymore, but she can be pretty speedy on those tiny legs.

Apart from her wing, the rest of the wounds have healed up without a problem. But still, she complains all the time. I think it’s probably boredom. She’s used to zipping about in the Gloamlight Realm like a swear-y hummingbird, but now she’s stuck with me.

I wish she would tell me what it was like there. But whenever I ask her anything, she just clams up, gives me some faraway-look-mysterious-past crap. She must have done something dodgy to be exiled here and have her powers taken away. I just don't know what yet.

It's been tricky trying to smuggle meat for Squirm into my room, especially since my parents know I'm vegan. I usually wait until they're in bed, but one time dad got up to use the loo and spotted me rummaging through the larder. I pretended I was having "chicken cravings", and asked him not to tell mum, because I didn't want her to judge me for "compromising my principles".

Luckily he bought it, probably because I looked as embarrassed as I was pretending to be. I'm a really terrible liar, but at least this time it worked in my favour. Now whenever mum makes me something with a vegan recipe, dad winks at me in this really cringey way, like he's in on the secret. Ugh. Dads trying to be cool is the worst.

Squirm yawns.

Oh, Squirm's waking up, I'd better stop for now. Bye, diary! Hope have a nice time relaxing in the drawer.

Sylda puts the diary in her desk drawer. Squirm stretches and coughs as she wakes up.

SYLDA: Good... afternoon, Squirm. Did you sleep well?

SQUIRM: No. I had terrible dreams. I dreamt that one of you big folk was pulling off my limbs and making them into soup in front of my eyes.

SYLDA: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

SQUIRM: What do you have to be sorry about? It's not your fault I had a weird dream.

SYLDA: Oh, OK.

SQUIRM: Anyway, has anything interesting been happening in this yawn-fest of a town?

SYLDA: Oh! Let's have a look at today's Prickwillow Post. There should be something in here that will satisfy your curiosity!

Sylda picks up a newspaper and opens it.

"Half-Orc Fails to Open Jar"

SQUIRM: Really?

SYLDA: OK, OK, let's see... "Witch's Familiar Reported Sick"

SQUIRM: That sounds at least a little bit interesting. Maybe it was a magical disease or something!

SYLDA: Oh, but the article goes on to say that the familiar wasn't actually sick. The witch just thought it was. It was a cat coughing up a hairball, apparently.

SQUIRM: Ugh. Don't talk to me about cats. That demon creature is still at large...

SYLDA: Ah yes, sorry, I forgot about... the tabby incident.

SQUIRM: Anything else?

SYLDA: Um... "Town's Smelliest Resident Finally Takes a Bath"?

SQUIRM: Put it away. My brain is deteriorating just listening to this nonsense.

SYLDA: OK. Sure.

Sylda closes the newspaper and puts it down.

But, Squirm, there must be something you can do to pass the time, to stop you getting so bored. I could help you...

SQUIRM: I can't do anything! My wing's been torn to shreds, I can't do any spells, I'm... useless. If only I could... Wait.

SYLDA: Wait, what?

SQUIRM: You can still move around on those great big legs of yours, you can still do magic, even if it is pretty basic.

SYLDA: I'll have you know I trained for three years...

SQUIRM: You can help me find a way to get my powers back!

SYLDA: But... I can't, Squirm. I need to find an apprenticeship, so I can get a job and earn some money...

SQUIRM: Oh, there'll be plenty of time for that. This is desperate! I'm in need! And you said you'd help me!

SYLDA: This is a lot to ask.

SQUIRM: Yes, but, you have to admit, it would be exciting. Wouldn't you like that? A bit of excitement?

SYLDA: Well, yes, I suppose...

SQUIRM: Then it's settled! You'll help me get my powers back!

SYLDA: But surely we'd have to go to the Gloamlight Realm to do that. If the fay folk there took your powers away, then they'd be the ones to give them back.

SQUIRM: I can't go back there, Syllda. I already told you. It's complicated. Anyway, I'm sure we can find a way to get my powers back without going there. I have some powerful connections in the mortal realm. I just need you to help me find them!

SYLDA: But I can't leave Prickwillow! I don't have any money, and my parents would worry if I just disappeared one day.

SQUIRM: Surely you could use some kind of basic transportation spell?
Something that would allow you to disappear one moment and reappear the next in a new place?

SYLDA: Yes, but that's one of the spells you need a professional license for. I can't just...

SQUIRM: License-schmicense. Do fay folk need paperwork to create eternal chaos and endless delight? No! They just need power. And you have it.
(Mutters) However limited it might be. (Bossy) Use it.

SYLDA: If anyone finds out I've been using professional spells without a license, I might be banned from using magic for good.

SQUIRM: Then don't let anyone find out.

SYLDA: I have to admit, I've been going a bit stir-crazy, just waiting around for someone to answer my letters and offer me an apprenticeship. It probably wouldn't hurt to get some practical experience while I wait.

SQUIRM: Yes, exactly. Nothing beats practical experience. Especially for someone as... naïve as you.

SYLDA: Naïve?

SQUIRM: Anyway, let's start tomorrow. I'll have a think about where we should go first, and you can practice your transportation spell.

SYLDA: Who says I need to practice?

SQUIRM: I do. I don't want to end up stranded somewhere because of your incompetence. Practice.

SYLDA: (Sigh) Alright. I'll do a few test runs. (Whisper) To keep you off my back.

SQUIRM: What was that?

SYLDA: Nothing.

Pensive music

SCENE 2

Birds chirping. Breeze through the trees. Syl da walking through grass.

SYLDA: OK, I think we're far enough out of town now. There shouldn't be anyone watching us.

SQUIRM: Good, good. Now, we have to make sure you can actually transport yourself somewhere useful, and that you can bring me with you.

SYLDA: I'm sure I'd be fine by myself, you know, Squirm.

SQUIRM: Well, I'm not. So, come on, get cracking.

SYLDA: I should probably practice transporting myself first, though.

SQUIRM: Fine, just get on with it.

SYLDA: OK, I'll just pop you down here...

SQUIRM: Careful, you imbecile, there's cow shit down here.

SYLDA: Oh, right, sorry, is this tree stump better?

SQUIRM: (Sighs) It'll do.

SYLDA: Phew. Alright. I've got my sandalwood box full of... (sniffs) ...yup, powdered bat bones... Just need to sprinkle some on the ground...

Opens box, sprinkles powder, closes box. Magical energy accumulates – sounds like wind chimes.

Picture the place I want to go... The Bleakleaf Forest... And say the word of power... *Flytja*.

A rush of wind as Syl da disappears.

SQUIRM: Well, she actually did it. She should be back any minute. Any... minute... now. (Pause) Oh, for fuck's sake, she's fucked it up already. Why did I think I could rely on one of the big folk? Cretins, the lot of them. And now I'm stuck in the middle of nowhere. Absolutely bloody brilliant. Well, I suppose this is my life now.

SCENE 3

Rush of wind as Sylda falls into a pile of leaves. Crows cawing.

SYLDA: Oh my goddess, I did it. I'm in the Bleakleaf Forest. In your face, Squirm. But... wait... Where's my sandalwood box? Must've dropped it somewhere in here.

Rummages through the pile of leaves.

Where are you, you little boxy bugger?

Sound of growling.

Oh... shit. Nice... massive... wolf creature... You don't want to eat me... I'm sure I don't taste very nice...

Wolf snarls.

I love your... slaverling jaws... Who's your dentist, may I ask? They've done a fantastic job of keeping them so... sharp.

Wolf begins to attack.

Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck! Think, Sylda, think, there must be a spell you can use. Think!

Ow ow ow ow ow! No, Wolfie, that's my charm bracelet, leave it alone!

Charm bracelet. That's it! A charm spell!

Yndisthokki!

Wolf begins to whine and roll over.

Oh, who's a good boy then? Oh no wait, you're a girl, aren't you? Yes, who's my best girl! Yes, you are! I need to find that box before the charm wears off! Yes, I do! Wait, what's this?

Sound of wolf pups whining.

Oh... it's your den, mama wolf! You were protecting your pups! Well, I can't blame you, I'm a pretty formidable foe, aren't I? Which is why... I should get away while the charm spell still works.

Opens box, Sprinkles powder.

OK, bye, mama wolf! *Flytja!*

Rushing wind as Sylva disappears.

SCENE 4

Birds chirping.

SQUIRM: (Singing) Two-hundred and fifty seven potion bottles sitting on a shelf...

Rushing wind as Sylva appears.

SYLDA: Phew. I'm back! Did you miss me?

SQUIRM: What took you so fucking long, you moron! Oh, you're bleeding. How did you manage that?

SYLDA: I accidentally landed on top of a wolf's den. But it's fine, I charmed it before it could rip my whole hand off, it's just a couple of bite marks.

SQUIRM: A charm spell. That's at least... reasonably resourceful of you. But how you managed to fuck up a practice run is beyond me.

SYLDA: I didn't fuck it up! I'm back here, aren't I?

SQUIRM: I suppose.

SYLDA: Shall I try the spell with you this time?

SQUIRM: I think you've done quite enough for one day, thank you.

SYLDA: What, are you scared?

SQUIRM: I'm not scared, Syllda, I'm just concerned about your skill level.

SYLDA: Come on, Squirm. Do you want to get your powers back or not? You're the one who wanted to baby sit me after all.

SQUIRM: Oh, fine, come on then. Just don't drop me underneath a troll's bridge or anything like that.

SYLDA: I can't make any promises.

SQUIRM: Great.

Syllda opens the box, sprinkles powder, closes the box.

SYLDA: *Flytja!*

Rush of wind as they both disappear.

Outro Music

CREDITS: You have been listening to The Prickwillow Papers, Episode 2, A Bit of Excitement. It was written, produced and performed by Maddy Searle, and was a Snazzy Tapir Production. We hope you join us again soon.