

THE CASE OF THE
BUG
ON THE
RUN

The First Kids Mysteries

The Case of the Rock 'n' Roll Dog

The Case of the Diamond Dog Collar

The Case of the Ruby Slippers

The Case of the Piggy Bank Thief

The Case of the Missing Dinosaur Egg



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RUN**

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Summary: When their pet cockroach disappears and then reappears wearing a tiny transmitter, seven-year-old Tessa and ten-year-old Cammie, daughters of the first female president, search for spies in the White House.

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*For the real Mr. Dustin Brackbill, librarian at
Mt. Nittany Elementary School.*

*And with thanks to Linda Margusity,
Kimber Hershberger and their third graders,
for lending expertise and bugs.*

CHAPTER ONE

Cockroaches have lived on Earth for 350 million years. They survived the asteroid crash that killed the dinosaurs. They survived the freezing-cold Ice Ages. Every day, they survive about a zillion cans of bug spray.

Cockroaches are tough.

But that does not make them popular.

Listen to this: “*Ewwwww!*”

That’s most people’s opinion about our new pet, which happens to be a giant Madagascar hissing cockroach. My sister, Tessa, and I brought him home from the National Zoo in a disk-shaped plastic box.

Not just anyone can adopt a pet from the National Zoo. Tessa and I are lucky. We are plain, ordinary American kids, but our mom is president of the United States. This gives us some unusual privileges. Besides adopting cockroaches, we get to fly on a special air force jet when we go on vacation. And we get to live in a big house with elevators and its own movie theater—the White House.

It was a Tuesday in July, one of the only weeks of the whole summer when we didn't have camp or away-from-home vacation. We were in our bedroom, which is on the second floor over the North Portico, also known as the front door. We had let our pet cockroach out of the plastic box and Tessa was holding him. Mr. Ross, who's in charge of the White House staff, was showing us and our grandmother the tank where the cockroach would live. It used to be a fish tank. One of the White House carpenters had made a lid for the top.

Granny said, "Tell me again, girls. Why is it you wanted a cockroach?"

I said, "It was Tessa's idea."

Tessa said, "The zoo had an extra. I thought maybe they would send him to live on a farm in the country. But then the keeper said not exactly, and I got a bad, bad feeling. So what could I do?" She waved her arms the way she does. "Someone had to save him!"

My little sister is a drama queen. She is also famous for liking things no one else likes. Compared to some of her favorites—like sea slugs, naked mole rats and squids—this cockroach wasn't bad. Picture an orange-striped wide-body beetle with a black helmet, spiky black legs and two delicate, curious antennae.

Smiling, Tessa held the cockroach out to Granny and Mr. Ross. "You can hold him if you want."

The cockroach hissed.

Tessa grinned like a proud parent. "Isn't that amazing? They're the only insect that can do that! But maybe I better put him back. You can have a turn next time."

There was a layer of dirt, twigs and leaves at the bottom of the tank. Gently, Tessa set the bug down and replaced the lid. The bug went exploring.

At the same time, all six Ks strolled over to take a look.

The Ks are the stray kittens we found under a bush last spring. Tessa and I were supposed to give them away to good homes, but now we're hoping maybe Granny will forget.

The cockroach's tank was on the low table by the little sofa. One by one, all six kittens jumped up on the table, sat down and stared at our new pet through the glass. Their tails were swishing.

"To a critter of the feline persuasion," said Mr. Ross, "that cockroach must look like a chewier, crunchier rodent."

Tessa looked horrified. "They can't get in, can they?"

Mr. Ross shook his head. "No way, no how. And your bug can't get out, either. With these hooks on the lid, this tank is guaranteed escape-proof."

Granny crossed her arms over her chest. "It better be."