

The World Without

Maria Arena

‘I can’t wait to grow-up; then, I’ll show her *normal*.’

‘It’s not the ladybird’s fault, Allie. Please don’t hurt it.’

‘You care more about a stupid bug than you care about me. I hope they all die.’

‘You don’t mean that! Imagine a world without ladybirds.’

‘Imagine a world without *her*.’

‘Allie! That’s a terrible thing to say. Take it back. Quick. Before something bad happens.’

‘You sound just like her: Mama’s little ladybird, always tryin’ to save the day.’

‘Please, Allie, can you just let it go?’

‘Whatever. Wouldn’t want you to tell on me.’

‘I never will, Allie, never.’

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‘When did silence stop being golden?’

‘Allie, this is serious.’

‘Yeah, you keep tellin’ me that, but I don’t care if you’ve flown a thousand kilometres, I’m not letting her back in.’

‘Things are different now; *she*’s different now.’

‘Not to me. To me, she’s as good as—’

‘Don’t you say it, Allie!’

‘Right. Still Mama’s little ladybird, huh?’

‘Allie, c’mon. Let us help. Mum—’

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‘—Mum? What’s up?’

‘Little Ladybird, I have something to tell you.’

‘Nope. Don’t you say it. I already told Allie: there are some things we can’t take back.’