

The private collection

The Collector looked out on Sydney Harbour. It was a warm, sunny spring day. His mansion had the best view in Sydney. The Collector was a billionaire. He owned the newest cars, the fastest boats, a private jet, a huge castle in the Swiss Alps, an island in the Caribbean – the best of everything.

His phone buzzed. He picked it up and listened. Then he said, ‘Send him in.’

A tall man with short, silver hair came into the Collector’s private room.

‘Ah, Mr Lynch,’ the Collector said. ‘Do you have it?’

Mr Lynch didn’t say anything. He just gave the Collector a small box.

The Collector held it for a minute. Then he walked to the window and slowly opened the box. A huge diamond shone in the sunlight. The diamond was unique. It was priceless. And now he owned it. The Collector smiled.

‘Well done, Mr Lynch! So, that museum in New York now owns a very large piece of glass. Is that right?’

‘Don’t ask, sir,’ Mr Lynch said, smiling.

The Collector never asked Mr Lynch any questions. When the Collector wanted something, he asked Mr Lynch and then gave him a lot of money. Mr Lynch could find anything, anywhere. Mr Lynch always found the things the Collector wanted for his private collection. In a huge room under the mansion there were lots of unique, priceless items. Most of them came from museums. A few items came from other collectors. The Collector bought some items, but when he couldn’t buy an item, he called Mr Lynch. No questions.

'I'll give you your money now,' the Collector said, sitting at his desk. He opened his computer.

Then he saw something and stopped. There was a story on his screen – about something new. This was unique! He wanted it for his private collection. He must own it!

'Mr Lynch, can you find something for me this week?'

'Yes, sir. Where?'

'You like warm weather and lots of sunshine, don't you? This item is in the outback.'

In the small town of Winton, in the Australian outback, sixteen-year-old Jake Wheeler wasn't happy.

'But Dad, I can help you! I'm a good tour guide. I take people to the dinosaur museum all the time!'

'Sorry, Jake,' Tim Wheeler said. 'You can't come with me. I'll be away for a week this time. Your mum needs you here.'

Jake, his father and his little brother Henry were outside the Town and Country Hotel. The Wheelers owned the Town and Country. It was a small pub in the middle of Winton.

'But Dad, I want to learn about being a tour guide on long trips, like you. And I've never been to Birdsville. Please?'

'Maybe next time, Jake,' Tim said. 'This time, you have to help your mother here at the pub. And you have to look after Henry too.'

'Hey! I'm eleven, Dad!' said Jake's brother. 'Nobody has to look after me!' Henry was reading a book, *Australia's Amazing Dinosaurs*.

'I have to go, boys. Look after your mother for me, please.' Tim put on his hat and got into his four-wheel drive car. Three other four-wheel drives were behind Tim's. The people in the cars all smiled at the boys. The tour group drove away – Tim at the front and the other drivers behind.



Just then, a small silver-and-red jet flew low over the pub.

'Wow!' shouted Henry. 'Did you see that?'

'Yes!' said Jake. 'It's coming in to land here!'

The boys heard the plane landing at the airport.

'Why is a private jet coming to Winton?' said Henry.

They went inside, but five minutes later they heard the jet taking off again. They ran outside and watched it fly away.

'That was a quick visit!' said Jake.

'Hmm,' said Henry. 'A jet lands here and then leaves very quickly ... Why?'

The visitors

The boys were cleaning tables in the pub. They were still talking about the jet.

‘Who owns it?’ Henry asked his brother.

‘I don’t know.’ Jake said. ‘Nobody around here owns a jet.’

Just then, a man and a woman came into the pub. Their clothes were new – their light brown jackets and pants, their big black boots, their belts, their hats. The woman wore a long green and brown scarf around her neck.

‘Sorry, the pub isn’t open yet,’ Jake told them.

‘Can I get a four-wheel drive here?’ the man said.

‘Oh, sorry,’ said Jake. ‘My father just left with all the four-wheel drives.’

‘Our dad’s a tour guide,’ Henry said. ‘He takes people everywhere! To Birdsville, to the Simpson Desert –’

The man turned to the woman. ‘Come on.’

They turned to walk out of the pub. Jake saw that they both had large hunting knives on their belts. Jake thought, *Who are these people? Everything they’re wearing is new. They have lots of money. And Mum and Dad always say we need money.*

‘Wait,’ said Jake. ‘Where do you want to go? You can get to some places around here without a four-wheel drive. I could be your tour guide.’

The visitors stopped and looked at each other.

The woman said quietly, ‘We’re in a hurry. A guide could be good.’

The man nodded. He said to Jake, ‘We want to go to the dinosaur museum.’

Henry said, 'Oh, that's the best place! You can see Banjo and Matilda – huge dinosaurs. They lived here millions of years ago! And the museum has lots and lots of fossils and other stuff. And you can touch a fossil! I'm going to be a tour guide there one day. You look like the museum guides in your clothes. But they don't need to wear hunting knives. Do you go hunting? All the men in Winton go hunting. My dad hunts wild pigs –'

'Henry!' Jake said, and his brother stopped talking. Then Jake said to the visitors, 'I can take you to the dinosaur museum. We can leave in a minute. My mum will be back soon, then we can go.'

'What about a car?' the man said. 'We're not walking there, are we?'

'Oh,' said Jake. 'Don't you have a car?'

'The jet!' Henry said. 'You came on that jet, didn't you?'

The man and the woman looked at each other.

'You talk a lot, kid,' the man said.

Henry just kept talking. 'Wow, that jet is amazing! When is it coming back for you? Can I see inside it?'

'Henry!' Jake said. 'Shut up.' He smiled at the visitors. 'Sorry. Winton is a small town. We don't get visitors coming on private jets every day.'

'Come on,' the man said to the woman again. 'We'll have to find a car somewhere else.'

'Wait!' Jake said. 'Can I still be your tour guide?'

The Wheeler family needed money. The pub didn't get many visitors and only a few local people came in for a drink.

'No, kid. No car, no tour. No guide.'

Just then, the boys' mother Kay came into the pub. She was carrying a box of bread and other things. 'Oh, hello,' she said to the visitors. 'Can I help you?'

‘No, you can’t,’ the man said. ‘We want a four-wheel drive.’

‘Sorry,’ Kay said, putting the box down. ‘My husband has taken all of them – and we’re the only place in town that has four-wheel drives.’

‘But Mum,’ Jake said, ‘they only want to go to the dinosaur museum. What about your car? It’s safe to drive it to the museum. You don’t need a four-wheel drive to get there. And I can be their tour guide.’

Kay said, ‘But I need my car, Jake.’

The man pulled out a lot of money from a pocket in his jacket. He held it in front of Kay. ‘Take it – we’ll bring your car back soon. And your son.’

Kay stared at the money. Then she nodded. ‘Okay. But you have to take both boys.’

‘No, Mum,’ Jake said. ‘Please.’

‘Yes!’ said Henry. ‘I love going to the museum.’

Kay said to her older son, ‘Jake, I have an important meeting at the bank this afternoon. I can’t look after Henry. That’s your job.’

Tim and Kay Wheeler talked a lot about the bank. Things were not easy. Both their sons knew that the bank could take the pub one day.

Kay took the money. ‘Yes, you can take my car. But it’s not good on gravel roads. Please be careful with it. And look after my sons. They’re good boys.’

‘We will,’ smiled the woman.

‘Keys, please,’ said the man. ‘We’re in a hurry.’

Kay got a piece of paper and a pen and gave it to the man. ‘Just your name and phone number, please. And your driver’s licence.’

The man took out his driver’s licence.

Kay read it, then she gave it back. 'Will you be the only driver, Mr Lynch?'

'Yes. My – wife doesn't like to drive.'

'Don't you drive, Mrs Lynch?' Henry said. 'I can drive a car and I'm only eleven. Every kid in Winton can drive.'

Kay said, 'Henry, go to the kitchen. Get some fruit and water bottles. And I made some sandwiches. You can take them. Hurry up.'

Henry went into the kitchen. Kay said quietly to Jake, 'I know Henry talks a lot. Maybe ask Tina to take him with a tour group.'

Tina was a friend of Jake and Henry. She worked as a tour guide at the museum.

Kay saw the Lynch's hunting knives. 'Do you both hunt?' she asked.


Mr Lynch smiled. 'Oh, no. We like to find things, not hunt them. But we know about the wild animals here in the outback. We like to be safe.'

Henry came back with a bag of food and drink.

Jake got his mother's keys and said to Mr and Mrs Lynch, 'Well, let's go. The tour starts now.'

This is the German version of **Dinosaur Hunting**

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