

Katie-Lee and the Monster Trees

Chapter 4 - April - Bluebell Time

It was late April and the bluebells were in full bloom. From the bedroom windows of their house on Forestdale Katie-Lee and mum could see the wood, just starting to turn a fresh spring green. And from beneath the trees peeped a vibrant blue carpet of bluebells.

'Just look at those beautiful colours,' said Mum as they were getting ready to go out. 'I think we'll take the camera with us today so that we can take some pictures.'

'Oooh goodee,' said Katie-Lee. 'Can I take some too?'

'Yes, of course,' Mum replied. 'You can take some of Bella as she sniffs through the bluebells and I'll take some of you with the beautiful spring-green trees in the background.'

They played 'I spy' as they walked along. Mum went first.

'I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with.... 'B'.'

'I know...bluebells,' shouted Katie-Lee.

'Yes, that's right,' said Mum. 'Now your turn.'

'I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with.... 'G' , said Katie-Lee.

'Grass', guessed Mum.

'No.' said Katie-Lee.

'Gate', tried Mum.

'No.' said Katie-Lee.

'I give up,' said Mum.

'It's GREEN,' said Katie-Lee gleefully. 'Look, everything seems to be turning green.'

And so it did.

They took lots of photographs. Katie-Lee took some of Mum and Mum took some of Katie-Lee. They took lots of pictures of the trees and the bluebells and they both tried to take some of Bella but it was hard to get her to stand still.

'Let's take a picture of the Monster Tree,' suggested Katie-Lee as they walked past.

'O.K.' said Mum. 'You stand in front of it with Bella.'

After the picture was taken, Mum walked on up the hill with Bella but Katie-Lee stayed behind and ducked under the branches into the green tent.

Someone was singing again.

'If you go down to the woods today,

You're sure of a big surprise.

If you go down to the woods today

You'd better go in disguise.'

But Katie-Lee couldn't see where the singing was coming from, because all around her was pitch black. When her eyes grew used to the dark she could just make out a faint red light coming from the place where Felicity's workbench usually stood.

'Hello, is anybody here?' called Katie-Lee, feeling a little bit frightened.

'Oh, Hello, Pet,' a familiar voice called. 'Just stand there a minute and I'll put the light on when I've just finished this little job.'

After a moment, Katie-Lee heard a switch click and the little workshop was filled with light again. Felicity stood over by her bench with a piece of paper in her hand.

'Whatever, were you doing in the dark?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Photography, Duckie.' replied the monster. 'Look!'

And she held out the paper she was holding.

The paper was almost all black, but right in the middle was the white shape of a beautiful leaf. It looked like a white shadow on the black paper.

'Wow, that's pretty!' exclaimed Katie-Lee. 'Did you draw it?'

'No, it's not a drawing, Sweetie, it's a photograph.' said Felicity. 'Come over here and I'll show you how I made it.'

The little girl crossed over to the bench and sat down on the stool next to the one that the thin monster was sitting on. Felicity pointed to a packet lying on the bench.

'In that packet, Lovie,' she began, 'there is some special paper. I can't get it out to show you because as soon as the light gets to it, the paper turns black.'

'Oh, so that's why the light was off!' said Katie-Lee.

'Yes, I had to turn the light off before I could work with it.' replied the monster.

'Yesterday, I switched my light off,' she went on, 'And then I took out a piece of paper and lay it flat on my bench with a lovely spring leaf in the middle of it. I put a piece of glass on top to stop the leaf from blowing away and then I turned the lights on again.'

'I see,' said Katie-Lee. 'So the paper round the edge of the leaf went black, but where it was covered up by the leaf it stayed white.'

'Yes, that's right, Poppet,' Felicity went on. 'When you came in I was just finishing the job. I turned off the light again, took the glass and the leaf off and quickly dipped the paper in chemicals to stop the middle going black too. And here is my photograph,' she said waving the paper. 'It's a bit wet still, but it will soon dry.'

Katie-Lee looked around the workshop. Leaf photographs were hanging up everywhere.

'I see you've made lots of them,' she said.

'Yes, sweetie, one for every sort of tree in the wood,' replied the monster. 'Would you like one?'

'Oh, yes please,' said Katie-Lee. 'Mum and I have been taking photographs too, I'm sure she'd like to see one of yours.'

'You can have this one if you don't mind it being a bit damp,' said the monster. And she handed the Katie-Lee the print she was holding. It was the shape of a lovely young oak leaf.

As soon as the paper touched her hand Katie-Lee saw Felicity's smiling face start to fade away and soon the workshop had disappeared. The little girl pushed her way between the branches and back onto the path, and skipped up the hill after Mum and Bella who were not far ahead.

'What's that you've found?' asked Mum looking at the soggy bit of paper clutched in her daughter's hand.

'It's a photograph of a leaf,' replied Katie-Lee, 'And I didn't find it, Felicity gave it to me.'

'Oh, yes of course she did,' said Mum raising her eyebrows. 'Let me see.'

The paper looked like a page torn out of a magazine and was quite black with a white oak leaf shape in the middle. It was pretty, but quite damp. That was not surprising. It had probably been lying in the wet grass, thought Mum.

'It's amazing how much litter Katie-Lee seems to find under that tree,' she said to herself.

When they got home they put the paper in the airing cupboard and when it was quite dry Katie-Lee stuck it up on her bedroom wall with Blutak.

'Tomorrow, we'll upload all the photographs to the computer then we shall see what photographs we managed to take in the Wood, said Mum.

The next day Mum uploaded the photographs and sat down with Katie-Lee to look at them. There were some lovely ones of the bluebells and of Bella and even some of those that Katie-Lee had taken of Mum had come out quite well.

Just one of the pictures hadn't come out. It was very dark with a funny squiggle in the middle that looked a bit like a smiling mouth.

'I wonder which one it was?' said Mum.

'I know,' shouted Katie-Lee, 'There isn't a picture of the Monster Tree. Don't you remember you took one of me and Bella standing in front of it.'

'So I did,' said Mum. 'Now, I wonder why that one didn't come out properly?'
