

Katie-Lee and the Monster Trees

Chapter 5 - May - Blossom Time

It was late May and the day had been fine and warm. Mum and Katie-Lee were gardening. Mum was pulling out the weeds and Katie-Lee was watering the flowers with her own little watering can.

'What are weeds?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Well, they're really just wild flowers,' replied Mum. 'We only call them weeds because they are growing where we don't want them to grow. See this one is a dandelion. It looks very pretty growing in the wild but I don't want it in the middle of the patio.'

Bella came sniffing round.

'Good, that job's just about finished now,' said Mum, 'and I think Bella is ready for her walk.'

'Shall we go to see how many different kinds of wild flowers we can spot in the woods?'

'Oh, yes, let's!' said Katie-Lee.

So they went indoors to wash their hands and get Bella's lead and they set off for the woods.

Even before they reached the woods Katie-Lee had spotted lots of wild flowers. The grass verges by the roadside were full of buttercups, daisies and dandelions.

'That's 3 kinds of flowers I've seen already!' cried Katie-Lee, 'buttercups, daisies and dandelions.'

It was cool and shady in the woods. The trees were all in full leaf now, lush and green. Katie-Lee looked at the ground around her.

'Why aren't there any flowers here Mum and what happened to all the bluebells?' asked Katie Lee. She remembered that last month when they had been out walking the woods were carpeted with blue.

'The bluebells only flower for a short time before the leaves come out on the trees,' said Mum. 'Then it gets too dark in here for most flowers. They like to grow in sunnier places like the open fields.'

'But you might see some if you look higher up,' Mum added.

Katie-Lee looked up into the nearby hedgerow.

'Oh, yes! I see lots of lovely pink flowers! What are they?' cried Katie-Lee.

'Those are wild roses,' replied Mum. 'They're cousins to the roses in our garden.'

'They're very pretty,' said Katie-Lee, sniffing, 'but they don't smell as nice as our roses do they?'

In the clearing in the woods there were more flowers. Katie-Lee spotted buttercups, clover and forget-me-nots.

'But we've already counted buttercups so now that makes 5 kinds!' said Katie-Lee.

'Can you remember them all?' asked Mum.

'Yes,' said Katie-Lee, 'there are buttercups, daisies and dandelions by the roadside and clover and forget-me-nots in the clearing.'

'Don't forget the wild roses,' Mum reminded her.

'Well that makes 6,' said Katie-Lee. 'Buttercups, daisies and dandelions by the roadside, clover and forget-me-nots in the clearing and roses in the hedgerow.'

As they turned up the hill Katie-Lee and Bella ran on ahead.

'I wonder if any flowers grow under here?' Katie-Lee wondered as she pushed her way between the branches of the Monster Tree.

She realised she was in Sobersides' house when she heard the usual doleful sounds. This time Sobersides was moaning.

'Oh dear, dear, dear, dear. I'll never be finished!'

He was sitting in the middle of the floor with a huge bowl in front of him and bags all around overflowing with white blossom.

'Hello Sobersides! Whatever are you doing?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Oh, hello Katie-Lee!' replied Sobersides. 'I'm so glad to see you! I'm making elderflower cordial. Please come and help me!'

'Of course,' said Katie-Lee. 'What do you want me to do?'

'Well, I went out this morning and picked all these clusters of blossom and now I've got to take all the little flowers off the stalks and put them to soak in this bowl of water,' explained Sobersides.

'But the flowers are so small and there are so many stalks that it's taking me ages!' moaned Sobersides. 'Maybe if there were two of us doing it it would not take so long.'

'I'd love to help,' said Katie-Lee and she sat down beside the monster and joined in.

'Aren't they pretty little flowers?' observed Katie-Lee. 'Just like tiny stars!'

While they worked they chatted and Katie-Lee told her friend that she and Mum had been out looking for flowers too, trying to see how many kinds they could spot.

'We saw buttercups, daisies and dandelions by the roadside, clover and forget-me-nots in the clearing and roses in the hedgerow. That's 6 kinds altogether,' said Katie-Lee.

'And on the way back you can look out for the elder blossom. That will make 7,' Sobersides suggested.

The work was soon done with Katie-Lee helping.

'What does elderflower cordial taste like?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Come and see me in the winter when it's ready and I'll give you some,' said Sobersides. 'It's lovely!'

'Come on Katie-Lee, time to be getting back,' called Mum.

Katie-Lee jumped up and as she did so Sobersides and his house vanished and she was back standing alone under the Monster Tree.

She ran out to join Mum and Bella.

'Oh Katie-Lee! What have you been doing to get your hands in that state?' complained Mum.

Katie-Lee looked at her hands - they were all green.

'I was helping Sobersides make his elderflower wine,' she shouted to Mum as she ran on ahead.

Mum shrugged her shoulders and smiled to herself.

'Another fairy story!' she thought.

Suddenly Katie-Lee stopped.

'Ooh Mum! What's that lovely smell?' she cried.

Mum caught up, sniffing.

'Oh yes, it is lovely isn't it! That's honeysuckle,' Mum answered.

'Look around and you'll see where it is growing.'

Sure enough twined up in the bushes above them was some yellow honeysuckle.

'That makes 7 flowers we have seen,' said Mum. 'Can you remember them all?'

'We saw buttercups, daisies and dandelions by the roadside, clover and forget-me-nots in the clearing, roses in the hedgerow and now honeysuckle in the bushes. That's 7 kinds altogether,' said Katie-Lee.

'And now I've spotted number 8!' she cried, 'Look, over there, there's some elder blossom.'

'You're right said Mum, 'the elder bushes are full of big white flowers.'

'No they're not,' said Katie-Lee. 'They are not big flowers - just lots of little ones all growing together and each flower is like a tiny star.'

Mum looked closely and saw that Katie-Lee was quite right.

'Now however did she know that?' Mum wondered as they walked home.
