

Katie-Lee and the Monster Trees

Chapter 6 - June - Shadow Time

It was 7-o'clock on a fine June evening and Katie-Lee was getting ready for bed.

'Why do I have to go to bed while the sun is still shining?' she grumbled to Mum as she brushed her teeth.

'Little girls need lots of sleep,' said Mum, 'and in the middle of the summer it is only dark for a few hours so you have to go to bed while it is still light.'

'It's not fair!' said Katie-Lee crossly.

'Never mind,' said Mum. 'Hop into bed and I'll read you a story.'

Mum was teaching Katie-Lee to tell the time and reading her a book called 'What's the Time, Mr Wolf?' Katie-Lee was a quick learner and she already knew all the o-clocks.

Katie-Lee had had a busy day, so after the story and a kiss goodnight she soon fell sound asleep.

The next day Katie-Lee, Mum and Bella set off for their walk as usual. Katie-Lee was running, skipping and jumping along. The sun was high and bright in the sky making short sharp shadows in front of them all as they walked.

'Can you run faster than your shadow?' challenged Mum.

Katie-Lee tried. But however, fast she ran her shadow was always in front of her.

'Your shadow is only short,' said Mum. 'Can you jump over it?'

Again Katie-Lee tried but although she could easily jump over Mum's shadow and Bella's she never seemed to be able to jump over her own.

Once they got into the woods the shadows disappeared. It was shady there and the woodland floor was covered with dappled light. Not enough sun got through the canopy of leaves to make clear shadows.

Under the Monster Trees it was even darker. Their needle-like leaves and spreading branches made gloomy tents where it was almost as dark as night-time.

'There aren't any shadows at all under here Mum,' shouted Katie-Lee as she ducked beneath the branches of the small Monster Tree.

As she stood upright Katie-Lee heard the sound of someone singing.

'Me and my shadow, Strolling down the avenue,
Me and my shadow, Not a soul to tell our troubles to,'

sang the voice.

'Hi Felicity!' exclaimed Katie-Lee.

'Hello, Sweetie-pie! How lovely to see you again,' said Felicity.

The thin monster was standing on the bottom rung of a rather rickety ladder, which poked up through a hole in the ceiling. A shaft of sunlight was streaming down through the hole.

'I was just going up onto the roof to check the time on my sundial,' the monster explained.

'What's a sundial?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Come with me, Honey-bun,' said Felicity, 'and I'll show you.'

The monster held the ladder for Katie-Lee while she climbed carefully up. At the top she found herself on a flat platform way above the top branches of the tree. It was not dark or gloomy here at all; the sun was streaming down brightly.

'Wow! What an amazing place!' exclaimed Katie-Lee.

'This is my outdoor workshop, Ducks,' said Felicity. 'I do lots of experiments up here when I need to use the sun or the wind or the rain. Come and take a look at my sundial.'

Katie-Lee had never seen a sundial before.

A tall stick, pointing straight up at the sky, was fixed into a flowerpot full of clay. Around the pot there was a circle of pebbles with a number painted on each one.

'Ah, I see that it is 3-o'clock,' said Felicity and she pointed to the shadow of the stick, which was covering the pebble marked with the number 3.

'That's clever,' said Katie-Lee, 'how does it work?'

'Well, Dearie,' said the monster, 'as the sun moves across the sky the shadow of the stick moves too. I can tell the time by reading the number on the pebble that the shadow falls on.'

'The shadow also changes in length throughout the day.' Felicity told her. 'It is shortest at 1-o'clock and gets longer through the afternoon,' she explained.

'I wish I had a sundial at home,' said Katie-Lee.

'Oh you can easily make one,' replied the monster. 'Come on down the ladder now and I'll give you a stick to make it with.'

'Whatever are you up to in there?' shouted Mum.

Katie-Lee came skipping out with a stick in her hand.

'Felicity has been showing me her sundial,' she told Mum. 'It says that it is 3-o-clock.'

Mum looked at her watch. It was indeed just after 3pm.

'That was a good guess,' thought Mum.

'What have you got there?' she asked.

'It's a stick to make a sundial,' replied Katie-Lee. 'We must plant it in a pot then we can look to see where the shadows fall.'

Mum knew about sundials but she had no idea where Katie-Lee could have heard about them.

'That's a good idea,' she said. 'We'll do that when we get home.'

'The shadow will be getting long by then,' said Katie-Lee. 'It is shortest at 1-o-clock and gets longer and longer as the afternoon goes on.'

Mum didn't think that was quite right. She thought the shadow would be longest at noon but she didn't say anything.

Katie-Lee carried the stick carefully all the way home.

After a quick drink they went back into the garden to make the sundial. Mum found an old flowerpot and Katie-Lee filled it with plasticine and stuck the stick in the middle.

By this time it was 4-o'clock and the shadow was quite long.

Katie-Lee chalked a line on the ground where the shadow fell and wrote the number 4 at the end of it.

At 5-o'clock Katie-Lee went back outside to chalk another line and number on the patio and at 6-o'clock, when Dad was home from work, she led him out with her and proudly explained what she was making.

Dad was very impressed.

The next day was also sunny and from early in the morning Katie-Lee went out to mark where the shadow fell each hour.

At 12-o'clock Mum thought, 'Now this will be the shortest shadow, I'm sure.'

But she was wrong. The 1-o'clock shadow was even shorter.

'Well I never!' thought Mum. 'However could Katie-Lee have known that?'
