

# Katie-Lee and the Monster Trees

## Chapter 8 - August - Blackberry Time

It was the last week of the summer holidays and Katie-Lee and her mum were out in the woods picking blackberries. It had been a long, hot, sunny summer and even the brambles in shady places were full of sweet, ripe berries. As usual, Bella was trotting along with them, sniffing at every tree.

Katie-Lee was carrying an old ice-cream carton to put the blackberries in, but it was filling up rather slowly because she was eating almost as many as she collected.

'Let's try to get the carton half full, then we shall have enough to make a pudding for tea,' said Mum.

'Here's a big one, look,' said Katie-Lee.

She picked it and popped it into her mouth.

'If you keep eating the best ones it will take us all day to pick enough!' said Mum.

Soon Katie-Lee's hands (and all around her mouth) were purply-black and her tummy was starting to feel full. She began to lose interest in picking blackberries and ran off to play hide and seek with Bella.

After a while, Mum said, 'I think we've got enough now. Time to go home.'

'Let's go past the Monster Trees,' said Katie-Lee. 'And let me carry the blackberries.'

Mum put the lid on the carton and handed it to Katie-Lee and they set off up the hill to the trees.

Katie-Lee ran on ahead.

'I'll go and see if the monster is at home today,' she shouted back.

'O.K. I'll meet you there,' answered Mum.

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Katie-Lee skipped up the hill and ducked down under the spreading branches of the monster tree. As she stood up again in the gloom, she found that she could hear the sound of someone sobbing. Looking around her, Katie-Lee realised that the magic had happened again. The dark green branches had gone and she was back once more in the strange little house with the spiral staircase.

This time the crying was coming from behind a door in the curved wall. Katie-Lee walked over to the door and pushed it open.

'Hello, Sobersides. Is that you?' she called, as she walked through the doorway into a strange little kitchen.

Sobersides was sitting on a wooden stool in the middle of the floor, with his head buried in his hands. He was wailing sorrowfully. The monster had obviously been baking, as there was flour all over his clothes and a pie dish lined with pastry on the worktop beside him.

'What's the matter, Sobersides?' asked Katie-Lee gently.

She went over to the monster and put her arms around him. That seemed to make him cry all the more and it was a while before he managed to answer.

'I wanted to make an apple pie for my tea,' Sobersides sobbed.

'First I made the pastry and put it into my pie-dish then I got out the apples,' he went on.

'But when I cut into them I found that they were all bad inside, so now I can't make my pie and I shan't have any tea.'

The monster started to cry again.

Katie-Lee kissed him gently on the nose.

'Never mind, Sobersides,' she said, comfortingly. And then, all of a sudden, a good idea popped into her head.

'I know what you can use to make your pie!' exclaimed Katie-Lee, 'Look!'

And she opened the ice-cream carton to show the monster what was inside.

'Blackberries! My favourite!' shouted Sobersides.

'Oh, but those are your blackberries. I can't possibly put those in my pie.'

'Yes, of course you can,' said Katie-Lee.

'I'm sure Mum won't mind really. We can have yoghurt instead for our pudding.'

'Are you sure,' said the monster. 'They do look ever so nice!'

'Yes, go on, take them,' said Katie-Lee.

So the monster washed the blackberries carefully under the kitchen tap and tipped them into the pie. Then Katie-Lee helped him to roll out the crust, place it gently over the top and pop the pie into the oven to cook. Almost at once the little house was full of a delicious baking smell and Katie-Lee began to wish she was stopping for tea. But a voice was calling, 'Katie-Lee!' and she knew that she had already stayed long enough.

'It's time for me to go now,' she said. 'I think I can hear Mum calling me.'

'Thank you so much for your help,' said Sobersides.

'I feel so much happier now that I shan't have to go hungry after all.'

'Oh, that's all right,' said Katie-Lee. 'I hope you enjoy your tea. See you!'

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And as she turned to go towards the door the magic little house faded away and she found herself standing once more under the green branches of the monster tree.

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

The little girl ducked under the branches and ran to Mum carrying the ice-cream carton. But now, instead of it being half full of juicy blackberries, it was quite empty.

'Katie-Lee!' shouted Mum. 'Surely you haven't eaten all those blackberries!'

'Oh no,' Katie-Lee answered. 'I gave them to the monster for his pie.'

Mum sighed.

'You and your monster friend,' she said. 'He seems to be very convenient sometimes, doesn't he!'

Katie-Lee slipped her hand into her mum's and calling, 'Come on Bella!' they set off for home.

'Never mind, we'll just have to have yoghurt for pudding instead.' said Mum.

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