

# Katie-Lee and the Monster Trees

## Chapter 9 - September - Harvest Time

It was September, and The Wood seemed to be full of scurrying squirrels. Katie-Lee and her Mum had only been out walking for a few minutes and already they had seen five of them, each one scuttling along, carrying an acorn in its paws.

'What are they doing, Mum?' Katie-Lee asked.

'It's harvest time for the squirrels,' Mum replied.

'They are collecting acorns and cob nuts to store away for the winter.'

'But squirrels don't have cupboards, do they Mum?' said Katie-Lee.

Mum smiled.

'No, you're quite right they don't,' she laughed.

'They will hide all the nuts in holes in trees, or in the ground, where they will keep dry and where other squirrels and birds won't be able to find them.'

They walked along the path that led around the back of the hill with Bella trotting alongside as usual. Bella stopped to sniff at every tree and then galloped to catch mum and Katie-Lee, her tail wagging merrily all the while.

It wasn't until they were on the way home that they came down the hill past the Monster Trees. As they approached them, they saw a squirrel rush across the path and duck under the branches of the small Monster Tree.

'I wonder whether that's where his hidy-hole is?' shouted Katie-Lee and she dashed in after him.

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As she pushed her way between the spreading branches Katie-Lee heard the sound of someone singing.

'Shine on,  
Shine on harvest moon,  
Up in the Sky,'

went the voice.

'Hello Felicity!' exclaimed Katie-Lee.

'Well, well! Hello, Ducky! How lovely to see you again,' said Felicity.

Once more the thin monster was standing beside the rickety ladder, which Katie-Lee had been up once before. The ladder poked up through the ceiling of Felicity's workshop.

'Come with me, Sweetie,' said Felicity.

'I was just going up onto the roof to look at the moon through my telescope.'

'Oooh, that sounds exciting!' cried Katie-Lee.

She rushed over and Felicity held the ladder for her while she climbed carefully to the top. She found herself on a flat platform surrounded by branches - like a sort of tree-house. In the middle of the platform was a huge telescope pointing up into the sky. All that was surprising enough, but the most amazing thing was that it was night time.

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It had been the middle of the afternoon when Katie-Lee had ducked under the branches. Now the sky was black and full of twinkling stars, but it still wasn't really dark, for overhead was the biggest, brightest moon Katie-Lee had ever seen.

'Wow, what a huge moon!' she exclaimed.

'That's the Harvest Moon, Blossom.' said Felicity.

'What a funny name. Why is it called that?' Katie-Lee asked.

'Well, Poppet,' explained the monster, 'this is the time of the year when all the farmers are working hard to gather in the harvest before winter begins. All the fruit and vegetables have to be picked and stored away before the frost comes to kill them.'

'Yes, and the farmers aren't the only ones,' interrupted Katie-Lee. 'We saw the squirrels in the wood. They are collecting their harvest too.'

'That's right, Flower.' the monster replied.

'Well now, Ducks,' she went on, 'there is so much to do, that it is difficult to get it all finished during the daytime. But at this time of year the moon is so bright that the farmers and animals can go on working at night and still see what they are doing. This bright moon lets them all finish the harvest in time, so it's called a Harvest Moon.'

'Can I look at it through the telescope?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Yes, of course, Chick,' said Felicity helping the little girl to climb onto the step at the base of the telescope.

'It's pointing in just the right direction, all you have to do is look through here.'

And the monster showed Katie-Lee where to put her eye.

The moon looked amazing through Felicity's telescope - so big and so near that Katie Lee could see the dusty plains and craters on it quite clearly.

'Wow!' she gasped, 'it's wonderful!'

And she stood there for ages, spellbound, with her eye glued to the end of the telescope.

But it was cold up there on the roof and the little girl started to shiver.

Felicity noticed and said, 'Come on, Love, let's go down now and have a mug of cob-nut soup to warm us up.'

Katie-Lee reluctantly left the telescope and clambered down the ladder after Felicity. It was cosy in the room below and the little girl suddenly realised how cold she felt. The monster heated the soup in the microwave and then the two of them sat, to drink it, on stools by the side of Felicity's workbench.

'I've got a little present for you, Lovie,' said Felicity when they had finished. And she leaned across the bench and picked up a small tube.

'It's a little telescope!' shouted Katie-Lee with glee.

'Yes, Pet, it is.' said the monster.

'It's nothing like as grand as my own but you will be able to look at the moon through it, and the stars too.'

'Oh thank you so much' said Katie-Lee. 'Mum, will be surprised.'

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At the mention of the word 'Mum', Katie-Lee jumped off her stool and no sooner had she done so than the magic workshop faded away and she found herself back under the small Monster Tree. A squirrel was just disappearing into the bushes.

'Did you see where he went?' asked Mum, poking her head under the branches.

'No, I forgot all about the squirrel,' replied Katie-Lee.

'Look, Mum. Look what Felicity gave me!' and she held out the cardboard tube.

'What is it?' asked Mum.

'It's a telescope,' Katie-Lee replied, 'for looking at the moon. I've just been up on the roof with Felicity looking through her telescope. It was fantastic!'

'I'm sure it was!' said Mum.

'Funny how these old trees seem to fill Katie-Lee's head with fairy stories,' mum thought to herself.

On the way home Katie-Lee told her mum all about the Harvest Moon and how it got its name.

'There'll be a Harvest Moon tonight,' she said, 'and I'm going to look at it through my telescope.'

'I wonder how she knew all that?' thought Mum to herself.

'I suppose they must have been talking about it at playschool this morning.'

Sure enough, when night fell, there shone in the sky the biggest brightest moon Katie-Lee (or her mum) had ever seen. Katie-Lee stood at her bedroom window peering through the cardboard tube.

'You look, Mum,' she said.

Mum looked through the tube. And do you know, it really did seem to make the moon look bigger!

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