

Katie-Lee and the Monster Trees

Chapter 2 - February - Snow Time

February had brought wintery weather to Forestdale. For over a week there had been a thick carpet of snow over the gardens and footpaths and long icicles hung down from every roof. Katie-Lee was out in the garden picking up the icicles, which Mum had just knocked down with the end of a broom.

'What makes icicles, Mum?' Katie-Lee asked.

'Well,' her mum replied. 'When the sun shines on the snow on the roof a little bit of it melts into water and starts to drip down from the gutter up there. But the air is so cold that the drips freeze and stick to one another to form little icicles.'

'But these are huge icicles!' argued Katie-Lee. 'I can hardly lift this one.'

'Yes, I know,' Mum replied. 'Every day more snow melts and more drips run down the icicles and freeze onto the ends - so they grow longer and longer. When they get very big and heavy they could pull the guttering down and that's why we have to break them off,' Mum explained.

'Anyway, that job's done now. Shall we take Bella out for a walk while were still wrapped up warm?'

'Oh, yes!' Katie-Lee shouted.

So mum whistled for Bella, locked the door and off they set.

The woods seemed especially mysterious covered with snow. Footprints ran everywhere, some made by birds, some by dogs and lots made by winter boots.

'I wonder if the monsters have made any footprints,' said Katie-Lee, and she ran ahead to the Monster Trees to find out.

Strangely there were no footprints around the first Monster Tree at all, not even those of dogs, birds or people, so Katie-Lee ran on up the hill to the second Monster Tree. This was another spreading yew, just like the first but a little smaller. Again there were no footprints to be seen so Katie-Lee ducked under the branches to see if there were any inside.

As she lifted her head and looked around, the snowy branches faded away and Katie-Lee heard the sound of someone singing. She realised that the magic had happened again.

But this time she was not in the cosy little house where Sobersides lived, but in a small round room that looked a bit like a garage. Tools were hanging all around the walls. Katie-Lee recognised a screwdriver and a drill but there were other more curious ones that she had never seen before. In the middle of the room, instead of the spiral staircase, was a huge round workbench and this was where the singing was coming from.

'When it snows, ain't it thrilling,
Though your nose gets a chilling
We'll frolic and play, the Eskimo way,
Walking in a winter wonderland.'

Standing at the bench was a very thin monster. She was holding a tin in her hand but she dropped it with a start and looked round at Katie-Lee.

'Oooh! Hello, Chucks!' said the monster, 'You gave me quite a turn.'

'Who are you and wherever did you spring from?'

Katie-Lee explained who she was and told the thin monster all about her other monster friend, Sobersides.

'Oh I know him, Sweetie' the thin monster exclaimed, 'he's an old misery, always moaning or crying. Me, I'm much more the cheery type. My name is Felicity and this is my workshop.'

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

'Well, Pet, it's the place I come to do all my inventing and experiments,' explained Felicity. 'I live in another part of the wood but I come here every day to work. I do some really interesting things in this workshop,' she went on.

'What work are you doing today?' Katie-Lee asked.

'Well, I've just had a bit of a problem with this tin, Dearie,' Felicity explained. 'I couldn't get the lid off so I filled it with water through the slit in the top, then I left it outside in the snow to freeze. When the water turned to ice, it pushed the lid off for me, Duckie. Look!'

Felicity held out a little tin, a bit like a syrup tin, with a slot cut in the top. The lid had been lifted by the block of ice swollen beneath it.

'That's a clever trick!' said Katie-Lee. 'But why did you want to get the lid off anyway?'

'Ah well, Lovie,' Felicity replied, 'it's because I got all mixed up, see. I thought that I had put my best ring in this tin for safekeeping, and I wanted to wear it. But while the water was freezing I found another tin with my ring in, Poppet,' said Felicity holding out a bony finger to show Katie-Lee the ring. 'So my ring isn't in this one after all.'

'But what is in it then?' asked Katie-Lee.

'Why! Nothing but a penny, Sweetheart!' said the monster. 'This tin was my money box and that was all that was left of my savings after Christmas was over!'

'Tell you what, Chick, you can have it!' said Felicity. 'It's good to have someone to talk to. Perhaps it'll remind you to come to visit me again.'

'Oooh thank you, yes, I'd like that,' said Katie-Lee excitedly.

'Now, come over here, Honeybun, and tell me all about yourself,' said Felicity.

So Katie-Lee sat down on a stool beside the monster and told her all about Mum and Bella and their walks in the wood.

'Katie-Lee! Where are you?'

Mum was calling!

Katie-Lee jumped up and was just about to explain to the monster that she had to go now, when she realised that Felicity and her workshop were melting away. Soon she found herself back under the branches of the yew tree. She pushed through them and ran out back on to the path.

'What have you got there?' Mum asked.

Katie-Lee looked down and found that she was still holding the little tin full of dirty ice.

'Oh, Felicity gave it to me,' she replied. 'It's a tin full of ice and there's a penny in the bottom.'

Mum took the tin and looked at it. The ice was thick and blackened with mud.

'And I suppose Felicity is another of your imaginary friends?' asked Mum.

'No, Mum, she's real. She's a thin monster and she has a workshop in that tree,' Katie-Lee explained and she told her Mum all about her adventure

'That child has a wonderful imagination!' thought Mum, as they walked home.

They left the tin on the kitchen sink overnight and, would you believe it, when they looked at it the next day the ice had melted and there really was a penny in the bottom of the tin.

'Now, however could Katie-Lee have known about that?' puzzled Mum.
