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Sophie and the Shadow Woods: The Goblin King

Written by

Linda Chapman
Lee Weatherly

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The Goblin King



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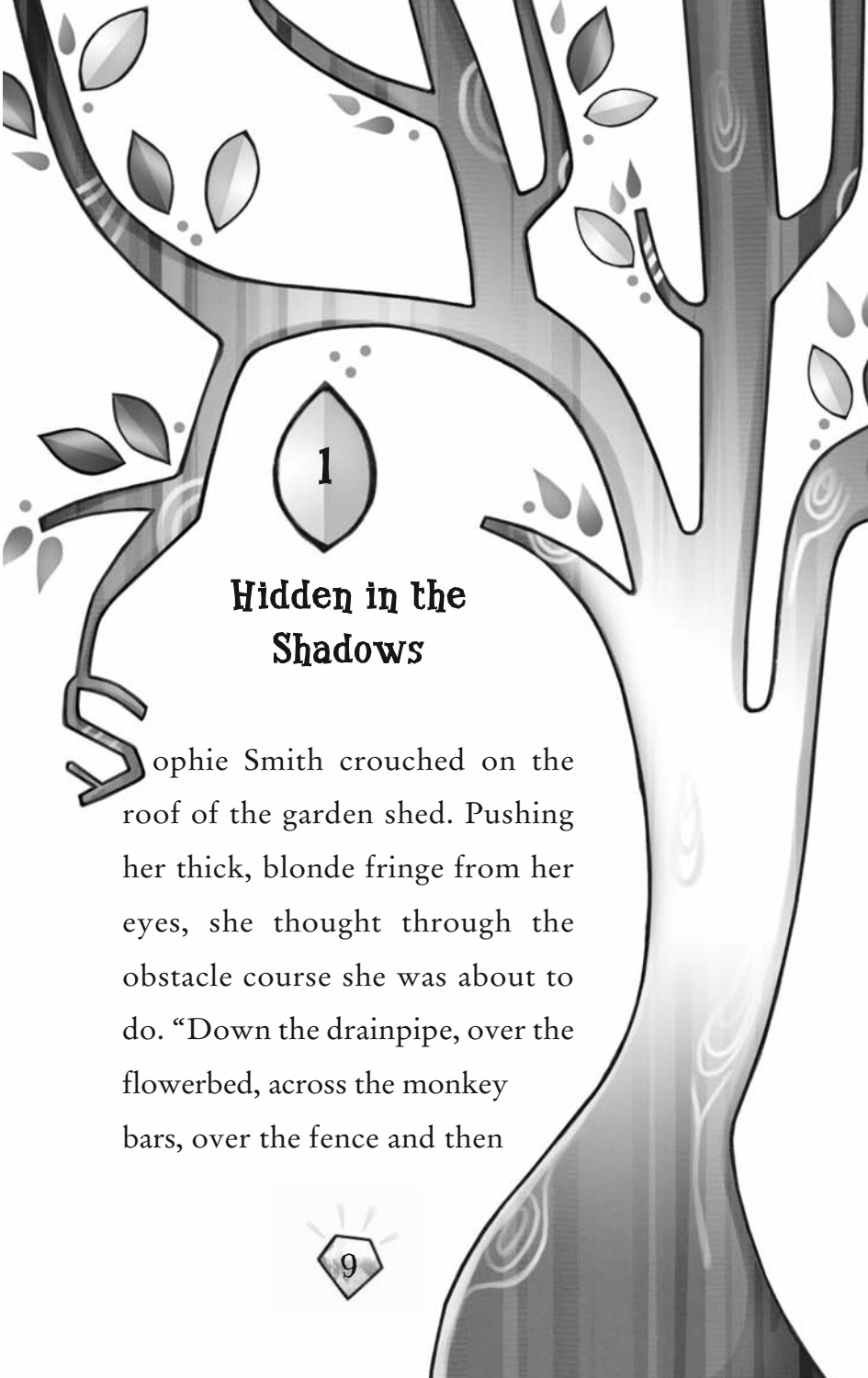

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Hidden in the Shadows

Sophie Smith crouched on the roof of the garden shed. Pushing her thick, blonde fringe from her eyes, she thought through the obstacle course she was about to do. "Down the drainpipe, over the flowerbed, across the monkey bars, over the fence and then

back to the shed," she muttered. Easy!

Her best friend, Sam, was standing on the grass below with a stopwatch. "So, the winner is the quickest one to get back here with the key?" he checked. The wind ruffled his spiky red hair.

Sophie grinned. "You mean the magic key that Dracula's stolen," she corrected him.

She and Sam had found a wooden box in her grandpa's wardrobe when they'd been playing hide-and-seek a few hours earlier. Inside the box was a large iron key, carved with strange and beautiful patterns with a hole in the centre. Sophie had never seen it before, but it looked so interesting that she and Sam had immediately invented a game with it. She planned to put it back before Grandpa got home. For the rest of that

morning, she and Sam had pretended it was a magic key that they had to rescue from Dracula's castle. It had been great fun and, after lunch, the game had turned into a timed obstacle course in the garden.

While some of the girls in her class at school liked to play games about fairies and others liked to giggle about boys, Sophie's favourite things to do were having races, playing on her skateboard and going to tae kwon do classes. She lived in jeans and t-shirts, and though she had long, blonde hair down to her waist, she never put ribbons or bows in it. When she grew up she wanted to be a stuntwoman in films.

Now she looked across the garden, her green eyes narrowing as she got ready. She was determined to be the fastest! "Are you

going to time me then, Sam?"

"Yep!" Sam poised his finger above the stopwatch. "On your marks... get set... GO!"

Sophie jumped on to the drainpipe and slid down it as fast as she could. The second her trainers touched the ground, she was off. She sprinted across the grass, her blonde ponytail bouncing up and down.

Leaping over the flowerbed, she ran to the climbing frame. As she reached the top, she flung herself on to the monkey bars and wriggled her way across, swinging her body from side to side. On the platform on the other side she hesitated, but decided not to bother with the ladder. Instead she jumped, feeling a moment of scary weightlessness before she landed. She bounced to her feet and was off again. Excitement buzzed through



her as she charged to the end of the garden and scrambled over the fence.

There was a wood on the other side – a thick, deep forest called Shadow Woods with tall trees that shut out the light. No one ever

went in there, and at school people whispered stories of strange things that had been seen moving through the gloom. Sophie didn't really believe them, but even so she rarely played in the woods, and only that morning her grandpa had warned her again not to go into them. She remembered that now.

We're not really going into the woods, she told herself as she ran to the first oak tree. The key was nestling in its roots. Sophie grabbed it, but as she straightened up, something pale and human-sized seemed to move in the trees. Startled, she stopped and stared. What was that? But the shadows were dark and still again.

Pants! She'd wasted time! Turning round, Sophie climbed back over the fence and raced to the shed, clutching the key. "Home!" she

gasped triumphantly as she hit the shed door with her hand. Sam clicked the stop button.

"So how long did it take me to rescue the magic key?" Sophie demanded.

"One minute, seven point zero four seconds!"

Not bad, Sophie thought. If she hadn't hesitated by the tree then she'd have been even faster. She glanced back at the woods. She'd been *sure* she'd seen something move there. But no, she couldn't have.

"My turn!" Sam chucked her the stopwatch and started to climb nimbly on to the shed roof. Meanwhile, Sophie jogged back to replace the key by the oak tree. As she climbed over the fence, the woods felt strangely still – there wasn't even a single bird singing. Goosebumps prickled over her bare arms.

You're being silly, she told herself firmly. *There's nothing here.*

Placing the key down in the roots of the tree, she headed back to the shed. Sam was waiting on the roof, his blue eyes determined. She lifted the stopwatch. "OK, on your marks… get set… GO!"

"Geronimo!" Sam yelled as he slid down the drainpipe. He was useless at anything that involved a bat or a ball, but he was a fast runner as well as a good climber. He sprinted across the lawn, jumping over the flowerbed. However, he was more cautious then Sophie when it came to finishing the monkey bars. He didn't jump at the end, but climbed down the ladder.

He's slower than me! Sophie thought triumphantly. *I'm going to win!*

Sam reached the oak tree. He rummaged about in the roots. Then he rummaged some more. Finally, he stood up and turned to her. "Where is it?" he shouted indignantly.

Sophie frowned. "What do you mean?"

"It isn't here. Where did you put it?"

Sophie put her hands on her hips. "It *is* there. I put it in the roots."

"Well, I can't see it."

Sophie ran towards him, scrambling over the fence. "I left it just there." She pointed, but to her surprise the space between the tree roots was empty. She stared. Was Sam playing a trick on her? Sophie checked his face. "You really haven't got it?"

"I swear I haven't."

They both began to hunt around, but there

was no sign of the key anywhere. Sophie bit her lip, her eyes wide. "It's gone!"

Sam's face paled. "What's your grandpa going to say?"

Sophie felt sick. Grandpa Bob was not the kindly type of smiley grandpa lots of her friends had – he was grumpy with sharp blue eyes and a grey, grizzled beard. He usually ignored Sophie unless he was telling her off. He much preferred Anthony, Sophie's twin brother. Sophie gulped. She had no idea what Grandpa was going to say – but she had a feeling it wasn't going to be good!

"It can't have just gone," she said desperately. "Let's look again!"

Getting down on their hands and knees, Sophie and Sam began to search.



Deep in the heart of Shadow Woods, Ug the Goblin hurried through the trees. His head was toadstool-shaped and brown rags covered his knobbly body. His snowy-white skin was flaking and tinged black at the edges.



He chortled, hardly believing his luck. He'd done it! He'd got the key! After all these years of watching and waiting! And he hadn't

even had to go near the house. Those two stupid children had practically given the key to him – leaving it sitting right where he could take it.

"Dimwits, numskulls, worm brains the lot of them!" he crowed. "But not me. I knew it was the right time to try to steal it. Ug's not King of the Ink Cap Goblins for nothing. Ug's the cleverest and craftiest goblin in the world!" He puffed his chest out. "Ug got the key to the gate. Oh, yes, he did!" His coal-black eyes shone gleefully. Now the shadow creatures' fun could really begin!