

The Monster of the Summer Woods – Sanuthi, Year 4, WA

Lily skipped happily through the lush green woods. She stopped to pick a few flowers and sighed in dismay.

Her house was right next to the beautiful forest, but now it was close to the start of summer. Her mother never let her near the woods during the hot season as the villagers had told strange tales of a long, quick, dark blue creature with electric blue wings that comes out only in the summer and sets parts of the woods on fire. They say the flames could be seen from the furthest part of the village. The villagers believed that many years ago, someone who went into the forest during the summer never returned. No one dared to test the belief. Some claim to have had a glimpse of this creature, but nobody believes them. They call it, 'The Monster of the Summer Woods'.

Lily had always wished that she would see this creature, but all the kids were forbidden to go to the woods during the summertime. However much Lily's mum stressed about this creature, she hardly believed it until she learnt about the Monster of the Summer Woods at her school.

Time went on. Only the group of girls knew what they were up to.

Lily was home and she called out to her grandma, "Is mum home yet?"

Grandma slowly came down the stairs of their little house and said, "Not yet sweetie but she made you lunch!"

Lily quickly devoured the bread and asked "Can I go to Ruby's house now?"

Her grandma said, "Okay, but be back..."

"... by dinner, I know," Lily called out as she rushed out the door.

The reason she wanted to get to her best friend Ruby's house was that she was part of a team of kids who wanted to see this so-called Monster of the Summer Woods themselves.

By the time she got there, she found everyone waiting for her. Ruby was the first one to notice her and she jumped up and said, "Guys Lily's here!"

Daisy sighed and said, "It's about time you got here."

"I only came because Mother told me to go with Rose," muttered a trembling voice.

Suddenly, Lily noticed a small kid wearing big round glasses.

"Who is she?" asked Lily.

"Oh! We forgot! This is Daffodil, the new girl in our club. She moved here last week, so I don't think you've met her. She's a bit shy right now but we know she is SUPER smart. The minute she came in, she started muttering the times tables!" Ruby went on.

Daffodil stammered, “I-I like m-m-math, s-so I d-d-do math t-to c-calm d-down.”

Lily smiled with joy. They had a new member!

“Alright, everyone. It is quite a day for Daffodil to come since today is the day, we hunt for the Monster of the Summer Woods!” said Lily.

“Violet has been working on a poster about the creature, purely based on the *mythical* facts. But here we are, ready to discover the truth,” cried Lily in excitement. “Umm... Violet, show the poster!”

Violet cleared her throat. “So, this creature is long, has a dark blue body and electric blue wings, moves as fast as lightning, and sets trees on fire in the summer. From what I’ve gathered out of these facts, it looks more like a long dragon with no legs, and it probably breathes fire. The most likely thing is it hides in a cave in the most dangerous part of the woods and sleeps till summer.”

After a minute of silence, Lily raised her voice. “So..... who is in?!”

In a matter of minutes, all of them were in the woods and were using the map that Poppy had brought along to slowly make their way to the Cave of No Return [the villagers made up very dramatic names].

“So, we should be at Blossom Valley now,” said Violet. Then she looked up and saw a huge cherry blossom tree in front of her.

“Next, we should be heading towards a river which is the entrance to the Forest of Terror. Lily grinned. “Then we’ll be making a boat!” she said. They had all gone to a survival camp and had learned to make a boat and were ready to apply what they learnt.

The so-called boat they made safely got them across the river though the ride was bumpy.

Suddenly the forest got misty. Lily and her friends ventured on.

“Hmm, fascinating,” said Violet. “This part of the wood is misty, and the trees have no leaves!”

Lily suddenly realised something. “Maybe the monster burned all these trees?” she wondered.

“Perhaps,” said Violet.

“Hey, look!!” said Ruby. “The map said we should be in the Valley of Thor-ow!”

Lily looked down and saw hundreds of thorns in all sizes all around! Some were tiny and they pricked her ankle. Others were huge and loomed above her.

“Let’s get out of here!” Poppy cried.

A while later they had gotten to the cave.

“Finally!” sighed Rose. “Now let’s go in.”

After a few steps into the cave, Lily froze.

“Guys... she whispered. “Look what we’ve found!!!”

The others slowly looked up to see the most unbelievable view. A DRAGON with scales as white as snow. Then, to their astonishment, the dragon *SPOKE*.

“Humans know of me?” the dragon exclaimed in surprise.

Violet got straight to the point. “Have you been setting the woods on fire?” she asked clearly.

“Me? No no, you got that wrong.” The dragon sounded worried. “It’s just the natural wildfires. I can help to turn them down as I’m a water dragon. I’m just white because I’m still young and our scales only turn blue over time. Anyway, I am happy to fly over and put out any fires so it’s safer for you kids.”

“That is a GREAT idea! And by the way, can you fly us home because the path is a bit dangerous,” asked Ruby excitedly.

“Of course,” agreed the dragon. “And by the way, my name is Riverina or River for short.”

Soon they had all climbed on River’s back and were soaring through the clouds, the wind wiping at their hair and gushing in their faces. It was incredible! River was amazingly fast, so they were soon back in the village and just in time for dinner.

The next day the children brought River into the village and explained to everyone about the forest fire, how it wasn’t a dragon and how River was putting out the flames making the forest safe even in the scorching hot summertime.

After a long discussion, the parents decided that it was indeed safe and so, from there onwards, the myth about the Monster of the Summer Woods was never heard of ever again.