

The cover art depicts a young girl with long brown braids and green eyes, wearing a purple dress with a red collar. She stands in a garden of red roses, holding a glowing lantern. In the background, a stone archway frames a scene with a silhouette of a person and a body of water under a starry night sky. The title 'LANTERN LANE' is written in large, golden, serif letters, with the lantern icon integrated into the letter 'A' of 'LANE'.

# LANTERN LANE

BOOK 2



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

TESSA GREENE



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# CHAPTER 1

Letty shivered from both excitement and the chilly dusk air. Tiny flames glimmered around her as she watched the lantern lighters igniting the final lights at the far end of Lantern Lane. Although she had only been gone for a little over a week, it felt like an eternity since Letty had been home. Perhaps it was because the castle felt so different from her own home, or maybe it was because so much of her life felt like it had flipped upside down within that time. Whatever the reason, it didn't matter much now as she stared at her father's dry goods store and her family's home directly above it. The shop's shutters were closed, but flickering candlelight filtered through the cracks: someone was still inside tidying up from the day's business.

Letty took a deep breath. Her heart fluttered as she wondered how her mother and brother would react to seeing her. If only her father were there as well, instead of being lost who-knew-where as he had been for nearly three weeks now. Letty shook her head to clear it. *Focus on the positive*, she told herself. *I'll see Papa again soon.* She wasn't entirely sure that was true anymore, but last she had heard, the search parties were still out looking, and there was still hope. That thought made her feel just a bit better.

She stepped slowly onto the porch and put her face up to the window in the front door, trying to peer through the shutters. Just

as she expected, there was Miles, his back turned to the door, with a crutch under one arm as he tried to maneuver a broom with the other.

Letty grasped the doorknob, not taking her eyes off her brother. The door was unlocked. Letty wasn't surprised; it always was. A little bell above the door jingled as she entered.

"Sorry, we're closed for the night!" Miles called over his shoulder without turning around.

Letty didn't respond. A lump had suddenly formed in her throat, and although she opened her mouth, no words came out. She simply stood in the doorway.

After a moment Miles seemed to notice that the bell hadn't rung a second time to announce that the door had closed. He turned to look over his shoulder. "Is there something I can help—" he started to ask, but he fell silent the moment he saw Letty standing there. His broom clattered to the ground. "Letty," Miles whispered.

Tears began to pool in Letty's eyes as she smiled at her brother. "Hi," she breathed, barely able to form the word.

Miles raced across the room, accompanied by loud scraping and thudding sounds as he hobbled on only one crutch. Letty found herself suddenly engulfed in the biggest, tightest hug she had ever felt in her life.

"Mama! Mama, come quick!" Miles shouted up the stairs as he squeezed Letty.

Scuttling noises came through the floorboards as their mother began moving around upstairs.

"Miles! Are you all right? I thought I heard crashing noises. Did you hurt yourself?" their mother called as she hurried down the stairs. She stopped in her tracks at the bottom when she saw Miles



hugging Letty. “Oh, Letty, honey,” she cried, flying across the room to join Miles and Letty’s hug.

Letty’s tears spilled over as her mother and brother embraced her. Mama was crying too. Even Miles sniffled a bit as the three stood there holding one another.

“What are you doing here?” Mama asked at last. “Did you run away? I thought you were going to stay until we could fix things with the princess. You might get in trouble—”

Letty laughed, wiping at her eyes. “No, Mama, Princess Maisy let me come home. She knows that she made a mistake. I have so much to tell you.”

“Well, come upstairs then,” said Mama, breaking away from the hug and pulling Letty toward the stairs. “The stew should be just about ready now, and you can tell us all about it while we eat.”

Letty allowed herself to be guided up the stairs. When she was halfway up, she heard a grunt and a scraping noise. “Hold on, I’ll be right there!” Miles called.

“Oh goodness, Miles,” Letty laughed, running back down the stairs to take Miles’s second crutch back to him.

“Thanks,” Miles said, situating the crutch under his free arm. “It’s good to have you back, Letty.”

Once they were settled at the kitchen table with stew and thick slices of bread in front of them, Miles and Mama listened raptly as Letty explained exactly what had happened.

“Were you frightened?” Miles asked.

“You have no idea,” Letty said with a chuckle. She was able to smile about it now that she was looking back. “I was terrified, especially because the princess refused to believe that I wasn’t who she thought I was, and I didn’t understand why. She expected me to

know exactly what she needed me to do and how to do it, and she was furious that I didn't."

"How did you manage that, Letty?" queried Mama.

"I don't think I could have on my own, but after I met Jocelyn—maybe Miles already told you about her—she and the other servants at the castle helped me write out a schedule to follow. After a bit, I learned how Princess Maisy liked things to be done."

"And she was pleased with you then?" Mama asked.

"Oh, no, not at all. She found every little thing she could to get upset about, including the dress I was wearing, but after I read your letter, Mama, I got better at standing up for myself. Princess Maisy still had her mood swings, but for the most part, it was better." Letty paused for a moment and dunked her slice of bread in her stew. The food at the castle was excellent, but she had dearly missed her mother's cooking. "It didn't get really terrible again until our fight this afternoon."

Miles cocked an eyebrow. "A fight today? What happened?"

"Well, the princess had hired a seamstress to make some new gowns because the prince of Pelorias is coming to visit. Today, they were all ready for her to try on, except she wasn't pleased with them. She threw a fit and screamed at everyone in the room, and I scolded her for being disrespectful." Letty blushed slightly. "I probably should have been more tactful."

"Who needs tact? It sounds like you did the right thing," said Miles, his eyes glowing with pride. Letty knew that Miles wouldn't have expected her to stand up for herself as she had done. She also knew that he always wished she would.

"You can try to do the right thing in the wrong way, Miles,"

Mama chided. “I’m not saying you did it in the wrong way, Letty, but I’m proud of you for taking responsibility for any mistakes you think you’ve made.”

“Fine, fine,” Miles relented with a wave of his hand. “But I still don’t understand. After all that, you’re going back?”

“Yes,” Letty replied, “early tomorrow morning.”

“Why? That princess was horrible to you. I ought to march down to the castle and give her a piece of my mind.” Miles gritted his teeth and looked out the window.

Letty could practically see the hypothetical scene she was sure was playing out in his head. “We reconciled. I apologized, and so did she. She promised that she would do better—that was a big part of why I agreed to stay once Princess Maisy realized I wasn’t the runaway lady-in-waiting. And besides, she needs me. It feels like the right thing to do.”

Mama put her hand on Miles’s arm before he could protest again. “Won’t the princess need you tonight?” she asked gently.

“No. Jocelyn offered to help her get ready for bed tonight so that I could stay here longer.”

“Jocelyn—you mentioned her before,” Miles said. “Is she your friend who was at the window with you when Peter and I visited?”

“Yes. She’s wonderful. She was the first one to realize that I wasn’t the real lady-in-waiting.”

“She seemed very kind,” Miles responded. One side of his mouth turned up in a timid kind of smile, but Letty didn’t think much of it.

“I’m glad you’ve found a friend,” Mama said. “And if it feels like the right thing to do, we trust you.”

The family ate together for a while in contented silence, grateful

to be together again and feel one another's presence.

When they were finished with their supper, Letty helped Mama gather the dishes and place them in the washbasin.

"Is there any news from the search parties?" Letty asked as she scrubbed at a stubborn spot on one of the bowls in the basin.

Miles and Mama looked at one another out of the corners of their eyes.

"There is," Mama said slowly. "There's a group going out all day tomorrow. Most of them are closing their businesses for the day to join."

Mama prodded at the fire, trying to maintain its warmth. She stared intently into the fire as she stoked it, and Miles gazed down at his fidgeting hands on the table. Letty looked back and forth between them. Something about their demeanor troubled her; they weren't telling her everything.

"What is it?" Letty asked. "I feel like I'm missing something here. Will someone please tell me what's going on?"

Miles sighed. "Listen, Letty," he said. "There is a group going out tomorrow like Mama said, but . . . they're the last ones. If they don't find him, they're calling off the search."

"Calling off the search?" Letty repeated. She felt like she had been punched in the stomach as the air left her lungs. Why would they call off the search? Surely they wouldn't just give up, would they? Everyone on Lantern Lane and in the surrounding village loved her father. Letty hadn't imagined the search coming to an end until her father had been found, and now she was forced to reconsider.

"They've looked everywhere they can, honey," Mama said. "There's one last section of the mountainside they're going to be

covering, but besides that, they've searched the entire mountain, including on the Pelorias side. They even searched the edges of the forest as deep as they could go before it got dangerous." She pursed her lips, trying to fight back tears. "He isn't there, Letty. There's nothing more to do."

Letty's mouth gaped open. Was this really it?

"But hey, hey." Miles leaned on the table for support as he hopped to the other side to put his arm around Letty. "There's still hope. The area they're going to cover tomorrow is pretty large, and nearly every man on Lantern Lane and many more from the village will be out there. I think they can find him. I really do."

Letty breathed in deeply, releasing her breath slowly to calm herself. "You're right," she said. "We can't give up hope yet. He's out there, and they'll find him."

"Remember the search party along with your father in your prayers tonight," Mama said gently. "Now, let's finish up these dishes and get to bed. I think we've all had a very long day."

"You said you need to get back to the castle early tomorrow, right, Letty?" Miles asked. "I can take you."

"On your crutches?" asked Mama, lifting one eyebrow.

"I can manage," said Miles, "and Letty can help me if I need it."

"Not on the way back," Letty pointed out.

"Then we'll pick up Peter along the way, and *he* can help me get home," Miles countered. "He's always up early. I'm sure he'd like to join us."

"It's really all right, Miles. We don't have to bother Peter. I walked here on my own, so I'll be fine going back—"

"I'm walking you back to the castle, and that's that," Miles said firmly but with a smile.



“All right, then, it’s settled,” Mama said. “Let’s get the two of you to bed so you have plenty of sleep before you’re off again in the morning.”



## CHAPTER 2

A light dusting of snow coated the ground the next morning, illuminated only by the lantern light as the Kingdom of Trielle prepared to meet the sunrise.

Letty huddled into her shawl as she walked alongside Miles and Peter toward the castle. Peter had been surprised when Miles and Letty had appeared at his doorstep that morning, but Miles was right: Peter was happy to join them and eager to hear Letty's story, which she spent most of the walk telling him.

"You know," Peter said after Letty was done recounting her adventures at the castle so far, "I'm going out with the last search party today."

"Are you?" Letty asked. "When are you leaving?"

"We're meeting in front of your father's shop just after sunrise. I feel optimistic about it. We have a very careful plan laid out for exactly how and where we are going to look for him. I really think we might find him today."

"I hope you're right," Letty said. Miles nodded in agreement.

By this time they had nearly arrived at the castle. Gentle rays of sunlight were just starting to ease their way over the mountains, tinging the dark sky with gold and turning the wispy clouds overhead a soft, rosy pink.

"Letty," Miles said as they approached the castle doors, "are you

sure you want to go back? We can turn around right now and go home.”

“He’s right,” Peter added. “You don’t have to do this if you don’t want to.”

“I know,” Letty sighed, “but I *do* want to. I want to help Princess Maisy get ready for the prince to come from Pelorias. I’m excited. Now that I can visit, I’ll be home again soon, and you can visit me too. So, yes, I’m sure.”

“All right, then,” Miles said. “I’ll stop by after the search party gets back and let you know how it goes. Hopefully I’ll be bringing Papa with me.”

Letty gave them each a quick hug before turning toward the castle.

“Good morning,” she said to one of the guards at the door. His face was familiar. She was quite sure that he was one of the guards who had brought Isla, the princess’s former lady-in-waiting, back to the castle the day before.

“Ah, if it isn’t the princess’s new lady-in-waiting,” he said. “That was quite the stand you took yesterday. I was stunned that she agreed to your conditions; you must be doing something right.”

“Thank you,” Letty said with a smile. The guards opened the heavy castle doors to let her inside. Letty turned back to wave to Miles and Peter one last time before stepping out of the chilly morning air and into the warmth of the grand entry.

As excited as Letty was as she made her way to the princess’s chambers, she couldn’t help but wonder whether this was really going to be the fresh start she was hoping for. How committed was Princess Maisy to practicing kindness and respect? Letty thought the princess would keep her promise, but she couldn’t be entirely sure.

BOOK 2

# LANTERN LANE

*“She took another deep breath, grabbed the handle firmly again, and pulled upward with all her might. Slowly, the door started to creak open, inch by inch, until the opening was wide enough for Letty to slip inside. The door closed solidly above her head. This was it; she was in. No turning back now.”*

The castle is bustling as it prepares for the arrival of the prince of Pelorias. As Letty is caught up in all the action, puzzling things continue to happen around the castle. Demonstrating courage and integrity, Letty works hard to support Princess Maisy while also trying to unravel the deepening mysteries.



  
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