

LANTERN LANE

BOOK 1



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

TESSA GREENE



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CHAPTER 1

Letty squinted at the glaring yellow sun, attempting to gauge its position in the sky. It was late afternoon; in only an hour or two, the sun would be setting over the kingdom of Trielle, casting pink and gold beams across the castle and all of the surrounding villages. She glanced down the long lane bustling with people, hoping to see her father in the throng. He had been gone longer than she anticipated, and Letty was growing more concerned by the hour.

She shook her head to clear it of her worries and peeked down into the large wicker basket hanging from her arm. She had one final delivery to make that afternoon for her father's dry goods store, and it was always her favorite. After a quick glance to ensure the road was clear of any wagons or carriages, Letty crossed the street to the cobbler's shop and walked around the back of the quaint stone buildings, stopping momentarily to smell the pink winter roses in the garden. Just beyond the garden, where the cobbler and his family lived, two sets of baby-blue eyes peered expectantly through the window under gingham curtains. As soon as Letty came into view, the eyes vanished from the window, and a

moment later, the door flew open. A little boy and girl came racing down the walkway toward her.

“Letty! LETTY!” the children cried in unison, throwing their arms exuberantly around her legs.

Letty laughed sweetly and leaned down to scoop up the little girl, whose hair was tied into swinging blonde pigtails with yellow ribbons. “And how are you today, my little friends?” Letty asked, taking the boy affectionately by the hand.

“Papa made us new shoes!” he said, bouncing and swinging Letty’s hand enthusiastically.

“Look!” his sister added, pointing to the leather boots on her dangling feet. “They have flowers on them!” Indeed they did: the sides of each boot were adorned with delicate hand-painted daisies.

“Beautiful, Elsie!” Letty exclaimed before an insistent tug on her hand brought her attention to the little boy.

“Are my shoes beautiful, too?” he asked somberly, as though it were the most important question in all the world. Letty pressed her lips together in a smile, revealing a slight dimple in one cheek, and did her best to suppress a giggle.

“Yes, Liam, your shoes are very beautiful, too.” He seemed satisfied with that answer. “Well, let’s bring these groceries inside for your mama, shall we?” Letty proposed, shooting a glance at the basket on her arm.

Entering the small kitchen, Letty was greeted by cheery lemon-yellow walls, each plastered with childlike drawings of flowers, ships, mountains, and animals. Red

gingham curtains fluttered in the light breeze coming through the open window, and a heavy wooden table sat in the middle of the room, adorned by a vase of winter roses from the family's garden. Letty placed her basket on the table and emptied its contents while Elsie and Liam stood on their tiptoes to watch. Dried beans, oats, cornmeal, jars of applesauce, and packets of yeast were set one by one on the tabletop. Finally, Letty withdrew a round loaf of crusty bread wrapped in an ivory tea towel covered with elegantly embroidered leaves and vines.

As Letty finished unloading her delivery basket, Kiana—Elsie and Liam's mother—entered the room, a cooing infant in each arm.

"Mammy!" Elsie exclaimed, dancing and twirling around the kitchen, her boots tapping and her pigtailed bouncing on top of her head. "Letty brought our groce . . . groce . . ." She squinted her eyes, concentrating with all her might on pronouncing the word correctly. "Groc-er-ies," she finally managed to say.

Her mother smiled encouragingly. "Yes, I see that." Kiana had the same golden-blond hair and blue eyes as her children. She looked tired—Letty could see dark bags beginning to form under the woman's eyes—but that was no surprise. Even though Letty was only fourteen, she knew that taking care of two energetic toddlers and twin infants would be exhausting work for any mother.

As Kiana's eyes scanned the groceries laid out on the table, her smile faltered slightly. "I'm sorry, Letty, but you must have made a mistake. I didn't order any bread."

“Oh,” Letty answered cheerfully, “I know. My mother made more than we can eat. You would be doing us a favor to take it; it would only go to waste.” This was mostly true. Mama had indeed made more bread than their family had planned to eat, but Letty did not mention that this was intentional. After all, a fresh loaf of bread seemed the least they could do to make life easier for the young mother.

Before Kiana could thank her, Letty’s attention was pulled away by another adamant tug on her hand. “Do you want to play wolves with me?” Liam asked. Though his voice was as serious and somber as ever, excitement danced in his pale eyes at the thought of such a game.

“You know I would love to,” Letty said, crouching down to look him in the eye, “but I can’t today. I have to get ready for my papa to come home from the mountains.”

“Your father isn’t back yet?” Kiana frowned, suddenly concerned. “I thought he left yesterday morning.”

“He did,” Letty responded, trying to mask the worry in her voice. “We expected him back last night, but he never arrived. I’m sure he will be home very soon, though.”

Anxious to change the subject, Letty returned her attention to Liam and Elsie. With a wink to Kiana, she let out a small gasp as her hand flew to her mouth. “Oh my, I nearly forgot!” she cried dramatically.

“What? What?” Liam and Elsie squealed excitedly. They knew what was coming next, and they adored the game Letty always made of it.

With exaggerated motions, Letty pretended to shuffle through her now-empty basket, then patted down the pockets of her dress and apron, muttering loudly. Liam and Elsie looked at each other expectantly, letting out small high-pitched giggles that sounded almost like the chirping of baby birds.

“Ah! Here it is.” At last, Letty drew two red licorice ropes from her pocket and placed one into each child’s chubby waiting palm.

“Thank you, Letty!” they cheered in unison as they clasped their hands around the treats. They each gave her a peck on the cheek before beginning to nibble on their sweet treasures.

“Yes, thank you, Letty,” their mother added with gratitude shining in her eyes.

“Of course.” Letty smiled and waved to Liam and Elsie one last time before leaving.

Upon stepping outside, Letty inhaled a deep breath of the crisp late-afternoon air. The words she and Kiana had exchanged about her father replayed in her head. *Of course Papa will be home soon*, she assured herself. Putting a smile on her face, Letty greeted her neighbors cheerily as they walked past, fixed her empty basket into the crook of her arm, and took off racing down Lantern Lane toward home.



CHAPTER 2

Do you see anything, Letty?”

Letty drew her violet shawl more tightly around her slender shoulders as she leaned out the second-story window and peered as far down the street as she could. Flickering orange lanterns lined the cobblestone lane. Beyond the lights, mountains rose majestically from the ground, and as her eyes moved upward, Letty could see the first evening stars beginning to appear like fireflies in the night sky. All these things were certainly beautiful, but Letty barely noticed them tonight. She only hoped to see her father’s figure approaching the shop below her.

“No, nothing,” Letty said, dejected. For over fifteen years, her father had journeyed up the mountain nearly every fortnight to stock the travelers’ hut at the peak with supplies from his dry goods store. In the past, he had always left before sunrise and returned by sunset the same day, but this time he had taken much longer: this was the second consecutive night he had been away from home, and his family was more than a little worried.

Letty’s mother crossed the kitchen to look out the same window, hoping to see something her daughter hadn’t. After flicking her eyes hopefully up and down the street

for a few moments, she heaved a defeated sigh, pulling the window shutters firmly closed and pacing back to the washbasin on the table. Her husband was nowhere to be seen.

“A storm will be rolling in before long,” she murmured, scrubbing vigorously at a plate with her dishrag.

Letty’s older brother, Miles, lifted his head from its resting spot on the dinner table. “He didn’t take an extra coat, did he?”

“No,” their mother replied. “He was supposed to be back before the cold front came.”

Miles’s square jaw clenched, just as it always did when he was thinking about something that concerned him. Letty came up behind her mother, took the dishrag from her hands, and wrapped her arms tenderly around her mother’s shoulders.

“I’m sure he’s all right, Mama,” Letty assured her, resting her cheek on top of her mother’s head. The reality was, she wasn’t sure; the mountains could be dangerous, especially if the cold turned to snow, but what good would it do to worry Mama further?

Miles’s knuckles rapped slowly and gently against the table, breaking the tense silence in the kitchen. Faster and faster, harder and harder, his knuckles rapped as his jaw continued to clench tighter, until suddenly he shot up from the table with a determined look on his face. “I’m going after him,” he said.

“What do you mean, you’re going after him?” Mama responded, staring in disbelief. Letty felt the breath leave

her lungs for a moment. She was used to her father going up the mountain. He was so familiar with the mountain-side that Letty hardly worried about the danger anymore when he was gone—except for now, of course. But Miles? He had never made that trek without their father, much less with the risk of a snowstorm looming. It was too dangerous.

“I mean that he could be ill or hurt. What will happen to him if he’s stranded on that mountain when the storm comes in?”

“No,” Letty and her mother replied in unison. Letty was prepared to launch into a long lecture about how Miles shouldn’t rush into danger, especially when he didn’t know where their father was or what he might need. While she was trying to gather her scattered thoughts, however, Mama took a deep breath and spoke before Letty could.

“No,” she repeated, “at least not alone.”

Now Miles joined Letty in her shock. “Mama,” he said cautiously, being very careful not to sound argumentative. “I’m eighteen years old; you don’t need to be so worried. I’ve gone with Papa twice before, and I can take care of myself.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt your competency, Miles. I know you can take care of yourself. What I’m worried about is that you may be right: your father could be injured or ill, but you have to realize that going alone is unwise. You don’t know what he will need, and you don’t know enough about medicines to help if there is a problem. I

do. Besides, if he needs to be carried down the mountain, you cannot do it alone. Letty and I need to come, too.”

Me? Letty thought, stunned. She had never been on the mountain before, not even with her father; everyone knew she was too scared. And to be there for the first time when there could be a storm? What if she got lost? What if she fell or froze or was caught in a rockslide? The very thought of it started Letty’s head reeling.

Miles considered what his mother had said for a moment, then nodded. Clearly he knew she was right.

Deep down in her heart, Letty knew it, too. At that particular moment, however, she was too busy trying to keep her heart from pounding out of her chest to pay attention to anything else it was trying to tell her.

“Miles, go get the extra coats from the attic while I go down to the storage room for healing salve and bandages. Letty, pack the rest of the bread and any other food you can find into the lunch pail.”

Immediately, Miles and Mama went about their tasks. Letty, however, had barely heard her mother’s instructions; her heartbeat pounded in her ears, and her breathing was quick and shallow. Her legs started to quake beneath her. Afraid she would collapse, Letty stumbled backward, grasping at the air until she finally felt a chair behind her and toppled into it. Anxious thoughts raced like stallions through her head. *No, no, I can’t do this. I can’t climb the mountain. I’m going to get hurt. Miles is going to get hurt, or Mama. What if Papa is already hurt? But if he is, I can’t do anything! I can’t help!*

Miles re-entered the room, a large stack of warm wool coats piled in his arms. “Letty, does this coat on top still fit—” He cut himself off when he saw her squeezing her arms around herself, her thin frame trembling like a birch leaf in the breeze. Quickly setting the coats down on the table, he knelt beside her. As he gently folded one of her quivering hands in his own, he tried to catch her eyes. “Letty, what’s the matter?”

Letty took a shaky breath. The lump in her throat kept her from answering immediately, so Miles continued. “Papa will be fine. We’ll find him and bring him back. It will be all right.”

Letty shook her head slowly, and tears began to fill her eyes. Why couldn’t she be more like Miles? He was so brave. All he was thinking about was their father and how to help him. How could Letty be so cowardly, worrying about herself?

“That’s not it,” Letty said, her voice quivering. She avoided Miles’s gaze as she spoke, fixating instead on a spot on the floor next to her. “I mean, of course, that’s part of it . . . it’s just that . . . m-maybe it would be best if only you and Mama go.” She began to speak more quickly, rattling off the only excuse she could think of as it popped into her head. “After all, we can’t leave the shop unattended. What if someone needs something? I should stay back and run the shop, just in case. Besides, it’s not as though I’ll be much help if I go.”

Miles released Letty’s hand and stood. He crossed his muscled arms as his thick eyebrows knitted together. “The

shop will be fine for one day, Letty.” His voice was not harsh, but it had lost its softness from a few moments before. “People can wait for their groceries, but Papa may not be able to wait for us.” In a few long strides, Miles crossed the room and began digging through the cupboards, removing bread, apples, and dried meats and nestling them in the lunch pail. “As for the idea that you won’t be much help,” he said, turning back toward her and resting his hands on the cabinet tops, “I think you would be surprised. Mama was right. I can’t carry Papa down the mountain alone, and you’re stronger than Mama is. If he’s hurt, I will need your help. If he’s sick, Mama will need help treating him, and you can do that better than I can.” He paused, casting around for the right words to comfort Letty, but unable to find them, he simply reiterated, “Papa needs you.”

“I know,” Letty whispered, “but I’m so scared.”

Her confession was met by silence. Letty waited for Miles to speak, but the seconds dragged on, feeling more like hours. Finally Letty lifted her head, ready to see disappointment on her brother’s face. Instead, she saw that Miles was still leaning against the kitchen cabinets, but his arms were now outstretched to her. Relieved, Letty jumped from her chair and ran to Miles’s embrace, letting a small sob escape her throat as she buried her face in his shoulder. Miles wrapped his strong arms around his sister protectively and hugged her while she tried to collect herself.

“It’s OK, Letty. You’re OK.”

Mama appeared at the top of the stairs. When she saw Letty sobbing on Miles's shoulder, she lifted her eyebrows, confused. Miles gently shook his head, quietly indicating that this was a bad time to interrupt; he had things under control. His mother nodded and silently slipped through another door into her bedroom. She knew that Miles was better than anyone at calming Letty.

"I wish I were brave like you are," Letty sniffled after a few moments. Miles squeezed her even tighter, wrapping her as securely and safely in his hug as possible.

"I'm not any braver than you," Miles answered her. "I'm scared, too."

"You are?" Letty pulled away to look at him, finding it difficult to believe that was true.

"Of course I am. I'm scared that we won't find Papa. I'm scared that we will find him and he'll be hurt or that I won't be able to care for him, and I'm scared that one of us will get hurt. But being afraid doesn't mean you're not brave."

"It doesn't?"

"Not the way I see it. Isn't bravery just facing something that scares you straight-on?"

"I guess so." Letty wiped tears from her eyes.

"So you can't really be brave without being afraid first, can you?"

"No. No, I guess not."

"You know, sometimes I think that the bravest thing we can do is take a leap of faith and trust that God will work everything out."

Letty hesitated. What Miles said made sense, but she knew that if she agreed, she would have to try to be brave. Was she ready for that? She still wasn't sure.

“Look, Letty,” Miles went on, sensing her hesitation. “Mama and I won't make you do anything. If you truly don't want to come, you can stay home, but I believe you can do this. I think Papa needs you. Ultimately, though, it's your choice.”

Letty's heart continued pounding in her chest. Closing her eyes momentarily, she tried to think about things the way Miles did. She was scared, yes. Something could go wrong, true. But if her papa needed her, how could she possibly say no? Besides, if she were to stay behind, she would just worry.

“You're right,” she said at last, trying to square her shoulders. “Of course I'll go.”

Mama entered the room behind her just at that moment. “Good,” she said. “If your father isn't home tonight, we will leave first thing in the morning.”

BOOK 1

LANTERN LANE

Citizens from the Kingdom of Trielle who dared to journey into the ominous, dark forest just outside the village were usually never seen again. Thus, Lantern Lane was created and lined with huge, beckoning lanterns set aglow each night. Fourteen-year-old Letty is perfectly content with her life on Lantern Lane until she faces her father's mysterious disappearance and then is mistaken for the princess's runaway lady-in-waiting. Whisked to the castle, Letty finds herself in a whole new world as she encounters daunting experiences and unexpected adventures. Featuring beautiful writing, a hallmark of *The Good and the Beautiful* literature, *Book 1* of *Lantern Lane* is sure to uplift, entertain, and inspire.




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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



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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.




The **Good** AND THE *Beautiful*
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The cover art depicts a library with tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. Two young girls are the central focus. The girl on the left has long brown hair in a braid and wears a blue dress with a white collar. The girl on the right has long black hair with a floral crown and wears a gold dress with a red rose on the sleeve. They are both looking at a glowing, golden book held between them. The scene is lit by two lit candles in brass holders on either side and a lantern hanging from the ceiling. The title 'LANTERN LANE' is written in large, stylized, golden letters across the top, with a lantern icon integrated into the letter 'A' of 'LANE'.

LANTERN LANE

BOOK 3



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

TESSA GREENE



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CHAPTER 1

Letty stood in the doorway of the cold, empty dungeon that was illuminated by nothing more than a bit of sunlight trickling through a small, narrow opening high in the wall. The pale light landed on two men sitting against the wall, huddled in thin, ratty blankets. One of them Letty had expected to see—in fact, her suspicion that he was here had driven her down to the dungeon in the first place. She instantly recognized him as Rylan the cobbler, who had disappeared from Lantern Lane about a week before.

Who Letty hadn't expected to see was the man sitting next to Rylan. His tight blond curls and green eyes, his broad shoulders and strong frame—although thinner than she remembered—were all very familiar to her.

“Papa?” she asked as tears sprang to her eyes.

Papa squinted, and then his eyes widened to the size of saucers. His jaw slackened. After a moment of staring in shock, he stumbled to his feet and took a few staggering steps forward.

“Letty, my girl? Is that you?” His voice was raspy and strained.

“What are you doing here?” Letty's lip trembled as she spoke, and the tears pooling in her eyes began to fall. She'd thought her father was dead. *Everyone* thought her father was dead! How had he ended up in the palace dungeon without anyone knowing?

“That doesn’t matter; don’t talk about that,” Papa hushed. He carefully pulled her into his familiar and comforting embrace, and Letty never wanted him to let go. She could feel his body shaking, and the soft sound of his sniffing accompanied the droplets falling onto her hair. She sobbed into his shoulder as he whispered, “My girl. My sweet, darling girl.”

“Everyone thinks you died,” Letty whimpered. “I missed you so, so much.”

“I know, Letty. I’m sorry.”

They stood there, relishing each other’s presence again. After a moment, Papa pushed her away from him and wiped a few tears from her cheeks. “Now, tell me what you did to your arm. Is it broken?”

Shaking her head and giggling, Letty said, “I’m just clumsy, Papa. I fell and strained it. It’ll heal up fast.” She stepped away from him so she could see his eyes as she asked, “Was it actually you? That night I was in the garden. Miles told me the search parties had given up, and we assumed you died.” Letty glanced up at the narrow opening and realized that the leaves and flowers she could see belonged to the winter rose bush. “You saw me through the window and spoke to me, didn’t you?”

Tears continued to stream down Papa’s face. “I did. I shouldn’t have. I’m sure it was confusing for you, and I’m sorry for that. I just couldn’t help myself when I heard you crying. The hardest thing for parents is to watch their children suffer.” His voice broke.

“But why didn’t you answer me again when I called for you? Why didn’t you tell me that you were here and that you were all right?” Her tears became hotter now as anger started to edge its way

in. “I needed you, and you didn’t answer me even though you heard.”

“There, there, my dear. I know that must have hurt. I wanted more than anything to comfort you, but I couldn’t say more. It would have put you in terrible danger, and I couldn’t do that to my little girl.”

“Danger? What danger?”

Papa shook his head. “Please don’t ask for details. The less you know, the safer you’ll be. It’s the only way I can protect my family right now.”

“But that doesn’t make any sense! You’re not a criminal, Papa, so why are you here? And what is the danger?”

The guard, Clement, pushed the door slightly open and stuck his head into the room. “All right, visiting time is over. You have to go,” he said to Letty.

“I’m not ready yet,” Letty replied, a pleading tone making its way into her voice.

“Look, you shouldn’t be here to begin with. It’s time to go.”

“He’s right, Letty,” Papa said. “I don’t know how you found out I was here, but it’s best that you leave.”

“But Papa—”

“Please, Letty, trust me,” he begged, gazing deeply into her eyes. Reluctantly, she nodded. “Can I have one more hug before you go? I have missed you so.” He held his arms out, and the tenderness in his eyes made her want to weep again.

Letty wrapped her arm around her papa’s waist, squeezing him as tightly as she could.

“I love you, Papa,” she whispered. “And I’ll be back, I promise.”

“Letty—” he began, but he was interrupted by Rylan.

“I’m sorry, but I have to know if my family is all right. Have you seen them, Letty?” Rylan asked. “I’m worried about Kiana taking care of the children all alone.”

Turning from Papa’s arms, Letty looked at Rylan. “I saw them a few days ago. They’re okay, don’t worry. Our neighbors are taking care of them,” she assured him. “But I’m sure they will be so relieved to know you’re all right.”

“No, Letty, you can’t tell his family,” Papa said firmly, “or ours, for that matter. No one can know that either of us is here.”

“But why?”

Clement rapped his fist against the door frame again. “Really, it’s time to go,” he insisted.

“Just trust me,” Papa repeated emphatically. “Now go. I love you, my girl.”

Frustration simmered in Letty’s chest. She didn’t understand, but the impatient tapping of Clement’s boot against the cold stone floor told her that there was no use begging for more time. Letty inhaled deeply, squared her shoulders, and turned on her heel, fighting to keep her lip from quivering again. Clement closed and locked the door firmly behind her, once again trapping Rylan and Papa in their dungeon cell.

“The blond man—he’s your father?” Clement asked, shifting uncomfortably.

“Yes,” Letty replied, then lowered her voice. “Clement, please tell me why he’s here. My father has never done anything illegal.” She had overheard King Henrick tell King Dorian of Pelorias that one of the prisoners in the dungeon—Rylan the cobbler, based on

King Henrick's description—was there for something to do with treasonous information. She added, "And he isn't a traitor. So how did he end up here?"

"I couldn't tell you if I wanted to," Clement responded, unconcerned.

"But you *have* to know!"

Clement shrugged. "I'm not the one who arrested him, kid. I have no idea what charges either of them is being held on. I'm just following my orders, and if you don't leave, I'm going to be dismissed from my position."

Letty's shoulders slumped. Everything about this situation was maddening, and she could feel a headache coming on from the confusion and frustration of the past few minutes. She couldn't ignore Papa's warnings about safety; he had always protected her, and she trusted him enough to know that if he was concerned, there was a good reason for it. She only wished she knew the reason! She would usually discuss something like this with her brother, Miles, but Papa had specifically said that no one else in her family could know.

"I'm going to make sure there's no one outside before you leave," Clement informed her. He climbed the stairs, keeping an eye on both Letty and the prison door as he did. He poked his head up through the cellar door and looked around for a few seconds. When he was done, he pulled his head back inside and beckoned for Letty to come. "I'll help you lift the door," he said when she arrived at the top of the steps.

Letty nodded. "Thank you for your help, Clement," she said. "I appreciate it."

Clement didn't reply but gave one firm nod before pushing the door upward. Letty scurried out of the opening as quickly as she could. Although her heart was racing, she steadied her pace as she broke through the trees as though nothing had happened at all.

BOOK 3

LANTERN LANE

All is not well in the castle of Trielle. Between the problematic visiting royals and withheld secrets, Letty and Princess Maisy realize their safety is in jeopardy, and they start to devise a daring plan to save both the men in the dungeon and the kingdom. With mysterious alliances, the nosy new captain of the guard, ballroom dances, and a royal proposal, this book will test Letty's courage, kindness, and strength in ways she has never experienced before.




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