



# Lena's Journey

LRC Epic Fairy Tale



## *Lena's Journey*

"Miss, you dropped your key," came the bold yet small voice behind her.

"I did what? A key?" She questioned while looking around in confusion before spotting the old key on the ground a few inches from her shoes. Picking it up, quickly she turned to thank the mystery person. She saw no one, just the same strange bronze man figurine she had seen in multiple other places throughout the ancient European town. She looked at the key in her hand and realized that she had never seen this key before and couldn't have dropped it. So who said she had?

"Great! You found your key, let's make haste!" came the bold small voice, this time to her left. She looked and was shocked to see the little bronze man now standing on the bench next to her.

"Excuse me? What? Who?" She asked, thankful there was no one to see her talk to a bronze statue.

"My apologies! Barnacle Z. G. Esquire, at your service." The bronze man offered with a bow. "Your key is one of magic and possibility, it will open many doors, possibly to treasure and adventure but may also lead to destruction, of you or the world. Keys are sent to the chosen in times of unrest. This one is yours. You must take it to the abandoned castle in the woods, and open the first door before midnight. Should you not make it, the key will absorb your soul and you will be trapped for eternity. You have no choice in this, but should you succeed in fulfilling the key's wishes, you will be invincible. Let's make haste," he finished before jumping off the bench and walking quickly towards the forest on the edge of the park.

She made no movement to follow, until the key, still held tightly in her hand, grew warm and sent a solid shock through her system so forcefully that she jumped to her feet and instinctually took a few steps towards the forest.

The smug look on Barnacle Z. G. Esquire's face was irritating, but crazy or not, it looked like she was following a bronze man into the woods so that a random magic key she found on the ground wouldn't imprison her soul.

As Lena followed Esquire into the woods she looked around wondering if she would ever see this ancient European town again. The farther they walked the forest seemed to get darker until they were surrounded by huge ancient trees. There were only a few rays of light. Esquire glowed even though there was no sun light shining on him and the magic key in Lena's hand was glowing. She tried to turn around a few times but the key kept shocking her.

Lena asked "How far is this castle?" Esquire ignored her and kept walking without answering.

The forest was cooler and a chill went down Lena's back. Lena felt like something ancient was watching them. There was not the usual sounds either that forests have. She could not hear any birds or animals moving around. It seemed like Esquire and Lena had been walking for hours when they walked between two gnarly trees curving above their heads, like walking through a gateway. There was the castle looking like a mirage, there but not.

Esquire finally stopped in front of the castle door made of some type of ancient wood. The walls were made with stone covered in ivy and the castle had the look of being in the forest for centuries. There was a misty fog around the castle which swirled when walking through it. Lena wondered if there were beings in the mist as it moved. Even though she did not want to start this adventure any faster than she had to. Lena wanted out of the forest of unknowns, feeling as if she was losing her soul already. Esquire had said it would not happen unless Lena failed to open a door in the castle.

Esquire turned and said, "I will open the castle for you but I will not be with you, for now! Remember what I told you about your key." The castle door did not have the usual openings the wood was moving and Esquire was pushing on different sections of the door as if it was a puzzle he was solving. "How will I know where to go in the castle and what door to open?" Esquire kept pushing on the

door saying, "This is your adventure only you can decide the path to follow and the doors to open. Here is my suggestion follow the light." Lena had no idea what that meant!

"Follow the light?" She wondered how this could possibly end. Typically, when someone tells you to 'follow the light', you are coming to the end of your existence. "Is that what this is? Am I dying? Am I dead?" She turned to Esquire, trembling at the thought. But Esquire was no longer there. All that remained was a small box with a note which read, "*Do not open until you are inside.*" The stillness of the forest was enough to make Lena go mad. The silence felt deafening. All she could hear was the sound of her own heartbeat, and Esquire's words playing like a broken record in her head.

Time was running out. Lena had to move fast. If Esquire was right, her soul was in danger. She tucked the box under her arm and moved closer toward the castle door. Suddenly the ground began to shake. Screeching sounds blared from the earth, as it began swallowing the trees around them. Lena had no more time for speculations and procrastination. She held onto the key, squeezed her arm around the box, and made a dash for the castle door.

The faster she ran, the further away the door seemed. "It's shrinking!" She shouted into the air, as she began running faster. Her legs felt like jelly underneath her body. If she didn't hurry, the entire castle was going to disappear. "Run, girl!" "Run!"

As her fingertips touched the door they trembled, dropping the key into the muck at her feet. She fell to her knees raking her hands desperately through the leaves and sludge until at last the key was in her hands. Her heart beat so loudly she was certain it could be heard echoing all around her as she scrambled to get the key into the large gothic looking lock.

The key didn't seem to fit. She struggled to make it work but she was worried it might break. It just would not fit into the lock. She was panicking, she had to stop and clear her head. She could feel something getting closer. Something sinister and frightening, though she could not see anything. She stared at the lock.

There was something stuck inside. She pulled a hairpin from her tossed hair and carefully worked the object out of the lock, she dropped it into her pocket. The overwhelming terror closing in was almost more than she could take. Stifling the urge to scream she tried the key again, and was at last rewarded with success as she tumbled to the floor. She closed the door behind her and bolted it from inside, allowing herself to relax a bit as she turned to see what she had gotten herself into now.

She slowly took in a deep breath, afraid to make any more noise than necessary. The entryway was quite large. The ornate twin staircase just barely visible in the dim light. She cautiously looked for a light switch or lamp as she felt her way along the wall. Suddenly there was a mud smeared face glaring at her and she let out a Yelp. Embarrassed, she realized it was her own reflection. She laughed quietly at her foolishness and turned around to find that she was less than two feet away from a man sleeping in a chair. At least she prayed he was sleeping. She stood frozen in place, not at all certain what she should do next.

It was at that moment Lena thought "I'm Dreaming this isn't happening. How could it?" She wanted to believe it was not happening but she knew the truth. She was not dreaming. Lena felt something come over her a familiar feeling. She could feel her heart and body relaxing, she took another deep breath only to remember why it was familiar. The dream she had exactly two weeks from today placed her in this exact same room, with the man sitting in the exact same chair.

Lena heard music playing, No, No, the music will wake him, it wasn't music it was a beating drum coming from behind the staircase. She couldn't see the light

it was too dim and now flickering. The man that was sitting is now standing. He shouting who's there? Lena thought can't he see me? Who's there? This time his voice was louder but she was right there in plain sight. He couldn't see her, is he blind? Is she invisible? Did the room give her magically powers once she entered? He's looking in the wrong direction. I'm standing here. She took her mind back to the dream she had exactly two weeks ago from today.

Lena remained as still as possible, barely breathing, as not to draw attention to herself from the shouting man who stood merely yards away. The crescendo of the beating drum drowned out the man's voice and its intensified cadence aligned with her own beating heart. She recalled from her dream that as long as the drumbeat was heard, the man from the chair could not see her. In a state of panic, the man appeared more and more disturbed, lunging forward and tackling the air in search of the unwelcomed visitor who'd entered the castle.

I must get out of here, thought Lena, before the sound of the drumbeat stops. She carefully backed up toward the staircase with her eyes fixed on the wild man before her. She clenched the key in her hand hoping it would reveal to her what to do next. The dream... she remembered that in the dream, just before she awoke, the drumbeat stopped and the man from the chair looked her in the eyes and leaped toward her like a leopard in pursuit of prey.

The drum cadence became slower and less intense as did the expression of the man. Her steps hastened until she backed into the staircase rail and heard the man more clearly. "Lena? Is that you? Are you here?" he asked. The drumbeat stopped.

Lena paused and couldn't believe her ears. That voice, the voice of the man sounded familiar to her. He continued to call out, "Lena, is that you? Did you find your way back to me?" Skeptically, but very curiously Lena walked towards the voice that she had once known, waiting for him to speak again. This time, Lena was listening so hard because she just knew she was crazy because it couldn't be

the man she had once known. A man who had disappeared years earlier. He called out again, "Lena, is that you?"

Her uncertain voice managed a hesitant response, "yes, it is I. How do you know my name?"

"I have known you since you were born, but it is not a wonder that you don't remember me," the man offered, still staring blankly ahead. "I have been searching for a way back to you for so long. Stuck inside these walls, unable to get out, I never imagined that *you* would be the one to find *me*..." He voice cracked as it trailed off. "I am...your father, Lena."

Lena, immobilized by what she had just heard, studied the wrinkled brow and sunken eyes of the man standing before her. "Was it indeed her father?" She pondered. He had gone hunting when she was barely beginning primer school and had never returned from the woods. All had feared him lost after weeks of searching, but could it be that he had been captured in this magical castle for all of these years? An impulse came over her and before she realized what was happening, her feet were taking steps toward the man and her arms opened to welcome an embrace. The man, now with trails of tears streaked across his checks, returned her embrace and Lena knew she had accomplished her mission from Esquire, she had found her father.

Suddenly, the key within Lena's hand began to shake and the metal became so warm to the touch, it slipped from her grip and clattered to the floor. Newly reunited father and daughter stood in awe as the key moved across the floor as if it were being pulled by an invisible source. It glowed gold as it traveled up the castle door and fit itself into the lock. The turning of the latch made a resonating click that echoed around the large room as the doors began to splinter outward from the point of the lock. As the center of the door began to fall apart, Lena's father grabbed her hand and pulled her towards the opening, "hurry, we have to get out now!" He leaned his shoulder up against the door and pushed his full weight against the cracking center. The door gave way and he stumbled forward

through the opening over the debris, pulling Lena with him, still grasping her small hand in his. They were free!

Lena and her father walked through the woods towards the town, each engrossed in their own thoughts. Lena thought back to that small bronze man and his promise that she would be invisible if she completed her task. With her father walking next to her, she smiled and knew that she had discovered her power, the invincibility of her father's love for her.

*The End*