

The Ancient King

By Jaelyn Coptin

Knock! Knock! Knock! I knocked on Ms. Larson's polished red door waiting for the clumsy woman to answer.

I was the only babysitter in the neighbourhood who was willing to babysit for Ms. Larson's kid, Marie. Marie was very messy and disorganized, like her mother, and always made the babysitter's experience a nightmare. She would trash the whole house and would act inconspicuous so she could hide. When Ms. Larson returned, the babysitter had no idea where Marie was. For some peculiar reason Marie was even more vicious towards me but I was determined to make Marie like me. Also, I desperately needed the money.

"Hello dear. Come on in," Ms. Larson declared as it broke me out of my reverie.

"Hi Ms. Larson."

Marie looked out through the doorway and she saw me. Her face curled into a sneer of disgust and she hustled out of the room. I would just have to try to act pleasant towards the girl until this horrid day was over.

"I'll be back in a few hours," Ms. Larson uttered as she shuffled out the door.

As soon as Ms. Larson left Marie bolted to the front door and ran outside. I ran after her but Marie was already out of sight. I tried not to panic while I ran around the neighbourhood looking for Marie. Suddenly, I glimpsed a flash of auburn brown hair turn into somebody's backyard. I crept into the yard and saw Marie picking fragrant flowers out of a garden. I snuck behind her and scooped her into my arms

“Let me have my flowers,” Marie shrieked as I hastened back to the house.

I dashed into the house before anyone saw us and hoisted Marie inside after me.

“You're in big trouble,” I proclaimed.

I had to brawl with Marie to lie her down for a nap and I eventually triumphed. I decided now that the little twit was asleep I could explore Ms. Larson's miniscule home.

I investigated downstairs but found nothing out of the ordinary. I silently climbed up the stairs and immediately went into Ms. Larson's bedroom. I searched all the drawers but could find nothing suspicious. I let out an exasperated sigh. When I reached my hand under the mattress, a prime spot for

all secrets, my hand ran over something thin and smooth. I grasped the queer object and uncovered that it was a photograph.

The photograph was glossy and looked fairly new. In it, was a woman who looked identical to Ms. Larson.

Her long, auburn hair was intricately braided with golden thread. She was wearing a medieval style, jade green dress that had a shiny, gold lace design on it. She had a phenomenal, jeweled tiara perched on the crown of her head. She was wearing a wondrous necklace. It was a sphere shape and had ancient Roman writing on it. In the middle was a sparkling diamond that seemed to shoot light beams in every direction.

Standing next to the woman, was a muscular man. He was in lustrous armor and was holding a pointed blade in his hand. He was wearing a prodigious crown that appeared to be made out of solid gold. He had a jet black, short beard and wavy shoulder length hair. His tanned skin made his green eyes vivid with colour. They were a stunning couple.

I was puzzled by the photograph considering the people and artifacts in the picture seemed to be taken from an early century. I also thought the man looked very similar to King Arthur but that was impossible considering the

other woman in the photograph, who I was beginning to think was Ms. Larson, was in the twenty-first century.

I slipped the photo into my pocket and decided to investigate it later.

Ms. Larson handed me my money and I mumbled goodbye to Marie. I hopped on my bike and eagerly rode to the library wondering if there would be any information to spurn my suspicions.

“Does this man look familiar?” I asked the ancient librarian.

“Strange enough, he looks very similar to King Arthur but the lady on the left isn’t seen in any history books from what I can recall.”

I kept telling myself that the photo didn’t mean anything crazy but I couldn’t help all my theories from overwhelming me.

I strode over to the history section anxiously awaiting what I could discover about the photo and its origin. My eyes were immediately drawn to a primeval-looking book. I grabbed it off the shelf and flipped open its crusty pages. I found a portrait of King Arthur who looked undifferentiated to the man in the photograph. I let out a shuddering breath that was filled with shock. I couldn’t find any information on the woman. When I flipped to the next page I saw a picture of a letter that had very elaborate writing.

The letter was addressed to an Arthur. I was intrigued and kept reading.

Dearest Arthur,

I haven't communicated with you in a while and for that I am deeply sorry. I have travelled back to the twenty-first century but I thought you should know that you have a daughter named Marie.

I was starting to connect the dots as to why Ms. Larson and King Arthur were together when it should be unimaginable. I continued reading.

I wish I could come back but travelling like I have been has been very exerting. If I time travel once again I am afraid I may die. I love you Arthur and I am sorrowful that you will never get to see your daughter.

Love always,

Patricia L.

My head was spinning. I looked at the caption under the picture that said, 'There is no known record of Arthur having a daughter which leads historians to believe that the letter is a hoax.'

I raced out of the library. I was feeling incredibly inundated and had many questions for Patricia Larson.

I hammered on Ms. Larson's door yearning to question her about the picture. "Ms. Larson, open up."

Promptly, I felt the door move only to see that the house was empty. It looked desolate as if no one was ever there. I heard a rumbling sound coming from the garage and I sprinted outside. Ms. Larson's car pulled out of the driveway with a frantic looking Ms. Larson in the front seat. I jumped in front of the car and commanded for her to stop. She burst out of the car.

"Please Josie. Let me go."

"I can't. You have to answer me."

Instantaneously, she pulled off her necklace and placed it in the palm of her hand.

"This archaic necklace allows me to time travel. I can't stay here now that my secret has been uncovered."

"What about Marie?"

"She and I are connected. She goes where I go. I may leave this life behind but at least Arthur and I will be reunited once again."

"You could die!"

“That’s a risk I’m willing to take.”

“NO!”

There was a blinding flash of white light and my ears popped. I threw my hands in front of my face to protect myself from the increasing heat. Suddenly all the light contracted and then exploded into one gargantuan firework. My heart thumped so hard I thought it would burst out of my chest. I slowly looked up only to realize Ms. Larson had disappeared.

“She’s gone.” I muttered.

I was petrified with shock. My hand was violently clutching the picture that I had crumpled into a ball during the time travel display. I cautiously unraveled it only to realize that Marie was now in the picture. The whole family looked whimsical and filled with pure jubilation. Ms. Larson had succeeded. The ancient king’s family was reunited, for eternity.

I noticed that something was absent from the picture. Ms. Larson wasn’t wearing her necklace anymore. My eyes widened in surprise as I saw something illuminated on the driveway.

I scrambled over to the mysterious object and observed it. The prehistoric writing seemed to be laced with scintillating orange fire. I picked it up only to feel a searing pain crawl up my arm. My skin started to glow a fluorescent

yellow. I tried to let go of the necklace but it seemed to be cemented to my hand. I let out a scream of pure agony.

After the pain had begun it was already over. My hand had the imprint of writing branded onto my palm.

I heard a strong, undefinable voice boom in my head.

“You are the Keeper,” the voice bellowed.

I felt an exhilarating rush as the world around me swirled and changed. I went to take a step but all I felt was the feeling of falling and the overwhelming sense of emptiness.

Epilogue

I was Josie, I am not anymore. I am the Keeper, the time traveler. It is my job to keep the past safe. I must fight great beasts and unimaginable creatures in order to keep our history preserved. I will do whatever it takes to keep this Earth sheltered, guarded. Without me and my powers the world and all its inhabitants would perish. The Voice taught me that. I must stay strong in order to stay alive. It's simple really. As long as I am breathing, the Earth stays prosperous. I am the Keeper.