

Garden  
of  
Long-Ago  
Greens





# Lina and the Garden Dinosaurs

*A Story for Lina*

*For Lina, who sees the ancient world in every garden—and for all  
children who know that wonder grows in green and quiet places.*

## The Sage-Green Gate

**T**he gate stood taller than Lina remembered. Its paint, the colour of sage leaves after rain, curled at the edges like dried petals. She reached up, up, up to touch the latch. Warm. Sun-soaked. It felt like a secret pressed into her palm.

Behind her, Clover's nose twitched. The rabbit sniffed the air in quick, curious bursts—left, then right, then left again. Something wild lived beyond that gate. Something green and growing and old.

Lina pushed.

The hinges sang a creaking, groaning song. Not a scary sound. More like the garden was yawning, stretching awake after a long sleep. The gate swung wide, and Lina stepped through.

Green everywhere. Green shadows pooled beneath the trees. Green light filtered through leaves overhead, dancing in patches across the path. Ferns uncurled along the stone wall like dinosaur claws. And there—rustling, always rustling—the sound of a hundred hidden things moving just beyond sight.

Clover hopped ahead, ears tall.

Grandmother's garden smelled like damp earth and rosemary and something else. Something ancient. Lina followed the rabbit deeper in, her heart thumping soft and steady.

The gate clicked shut behind them.

## Underneath the Fern Canopy

**L**ina dropped to her knees and crawled beneath the fern canopy.

The fronds arched high above her like ancient ribs—enormous, curved, older than anything she could imagine. She stretched one hand upward, brushing the underside of a leaf. Cool and damp, it felt velvet-soft against her fingertips.

Green light filtered through in ribbons and pools, painting her arms sage, painting her rabbit, who hopped three steps ahead, ears flicking at shadows.

"Wait for me," Lina whispered.

The ground was springy with moss. Each time her palm pressed down, tiny water drops rose up—cold, surprising, sighing in the quiet. The air smelled of earth and rain from long ago, maybe yesterday, maybe a hundred years before she was born.

Lina paused. She tilted her head.

Somewhere in this green glow, dinosaurs had walked. She was certain. Their feet had pressed these same stones deeper into soil. Their breath had stirred these ferns when they were small and new.

Now only whispers remained. Only shadows that flickered when the wind moved.

Her rabbit disappeared around a mossy stone.

Lina followed, crawling deeper into the long-ago green.

# The Footprint in the Mud

**L**ina knelt at the pond's edge where the earth was soft and cool. Mud squeezed between her toes. There, pressed into the sage-coloured clay, lay a footprint unlike any she had ever seen.

Three toes. Long. Spreading like fingers reaching into tomorrow.

Her rabbit hopped close, whiskers trembling. He sniffed the print once, twice, then looked up at Lina with his dark, serious eyes.

"What made you?" Lina whispered to the footprint.

She touched it with one careful finger, tracing the ridges where each toe had pressed down. The mud was still damp in the deepest parts, still holding its shape. Still remembering.

A bird might leave three toes, Grandmother had told her once. Herons visited the pond at dawn, their legs thin as reeds.

But this print was different. Deeper. The toes were thick and strong, and at the tip of each one, a small dimple—as if something sharp had rested there.

A claw, perhaps.

Lina's heart quickened. She thought of her dinosaur books, their pages worn soft from turning. She thought of creatures who walked when the world was young and green, when gardens stretched beyond imagining.

Could it be?

The rabbit's nose twitched. The pond held its breath.

## The Hollow Log Cave

**T**he fallen log lay lengthwise across the path, thick as grandmother's armchair and blanketed in soft moss the colour of Lina's favourite sage sweater. One end gaped open like a yawning mouth—a cave, a real cave, right here in the garden.

Lina knelt down, knees pressing into the cool earth. Her rabbit sat perfectly still at the entrance, long ears swiveling, listening to secrets Lina couldn't hear yet. Inside, the hollow hummed—not silent, but alive. Cricket-song thrummed from the shadows. Something rustled. Her breath caught.

She bent lower. Closer. The darkness smelled like rain and old wood and stories that had been sleeping a very long time.

Then—a glint. Two glints. Tiny emerald lights.

Lina's heart skipped.

Not eyes. Not teeth. Just a beetle, wearing armour that caught the last threads of afternoon sun. Its wings flashed green-gold as it crawled across a curl of papery bark. Another beetle joined it, then another, a whole constellation of them moving through their log-cave world.

Lina exhaled, wonder flooding warm through her chest. Monsters lived only in the not-looking. When you were brave enough to bend close, really close, the darkness gave up its jewels. The garden held so much more than she'd ever imagined—mysteries tucked into every corner, waiting for someone small enough, curious enough, to find them.

# The Egg of Many Colors

**D**eep inside the hollow log, where light falls in stripes of gold and shadow, Lina's fingers brush something smooth. Not bark. Not leaves. Something else.

She draws it out into the dappled afternoon. A stone? No—too perfect. An egg.

It settles in her cupped palms, cool and surprisingly heavy, like holding a secret with weight. The shell swirls with sage and cream, freckled the colour of wet earth. Lina tilts it gently, watching the speckles catch the sun.

Her rabbit hops closer, whiskers twitching.

"What do you think lives inside?" she  
whispers.

The egg is silent, keeping its mystery.

She imagines wings—feathered or leathery? She thinks of dinosaurs, though grandmother says those sleep beneath mountains now. Could it be a bird? A dragon small enough for her pocket? Something unnamed, waiting all this time in the dark?

The wind moves through the garden. Somewhere, a bee hums. Lina holds the egg closer, feeling its coolness seep into her warm hands.

She will wait. She will wonder. That is enough.

## The Bravest Step

**T**he tangle of roots lies between Lina and the garden beyond—thick as dinosaur bones, twisted into knots that smell of damp earth and yesterday's rain.

Behind her, the log-cave hums with shadow. Ahead, sage-coloured ferns nod in patches of gold light.

Her rabbit presses close, whiskers trembling against her ankle. Once, twice, three times—a gentle nudge that says *forward*.

Lina lifts one foot. The world tilts. Her arms stretch wide like the wings grandmother once showed her in a book, the ones that caught ancient winds. Her toes curl inside her shoes. Her breath catches.

The roots wait, patient as stones.

She thinks of the long-necked giants who must have lifted their feet just like this, over fallen trees and rivers, one careful step after another across the whole wide world.

Her rabbit nudges again.

So Lina leaps.

For one bright second she is flying—truly flying  
—and then the soft grass rushes up to meet her,  
cool and welcoming, and she lands in the sun.

Her rabbit hops through behind her, easy as  
blinking, and together they turn to look back at  
the dark they have left behind.

## Grandmother's Knowing Smile

**L**ina ran all the way from the ferns to the little stone bench where Grandmother sat shelling peas. The stone egg felt cool and heavy in her pocket, smooth as river glass. Her rabbit hopped behind, ears bouncing.

"Grandmother," Lina said, breathless, "I found something."

She held out the sage-green stone, round and perfect as a secret.

Grandmother set down her bowl. She leaned close, her eyes crinkling at the corners like tissue paper folded and unfolded a hundred times. The afternoon light caught in her silver hair.

"Ah," Grandmother said softly.

She took the stone egg in her palm, turning it slowly. Her hands were warm and papery, gentle as moth wings. Then she folded Lina's small fingers over it again, covering them with her own.

"The garden keeps its secrets," Grandmother said, "and shares them with the brave."

Lina's heart fluttered like a caught butterfly.

"Was I brave?" she whispered.

Grandmother's smile was answer enough. It was a smile that knew about hidden paths and ancient trees and little girls who weren't afraid to look.

Together they sat on the warm stone bench, holding the egg between them, while the pea vines whispered and the shadows pooled sage-colored across the grass.

## Home with Wonder

**L**ina knelt in the soft moss beneath the ferns, where shadows pooled like water. The stone egg felt warm in her palm, though she couldn't say why—perhaps it had been holding all the afternoon's light. She set it down gently, nestling it among curled fronds the colour of her favourite sage sweater.

"There," she whispered. "Back where you belong."

Her rabbit twitched his nose, watching. A breeze moved through the garden, and for just a heartbeat, Lina heard it—the far-off call of something ancient and grand, moving through a world that had been and might still be, if you knew how to look.

She picked up her rabbit, feeling his heartbeat flutter against her arms, his fur sun-warmed and smelling of clover.

The garden gate stood open, golden in the slanting light. Grandmother's cottage chimney puffed gentle smoke beyond the roses. But Lina turned back once more, memorizing the way the ferns curved, how the stones held their secrets, how the whole world hummed with hidden things.

She didn't need to carry the stone home. She had something better now: eyes that knew where to look and a heart that remembered how to wonder.

Together, girl and rabbit walked toward supper,  
toward home, toward all the ordinary,  
extraordinary days ahead.



*This book was crafted on PAGEPRINTED, 2026.*

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• format children\_85 • 2026-05-22T00:00:00Z •