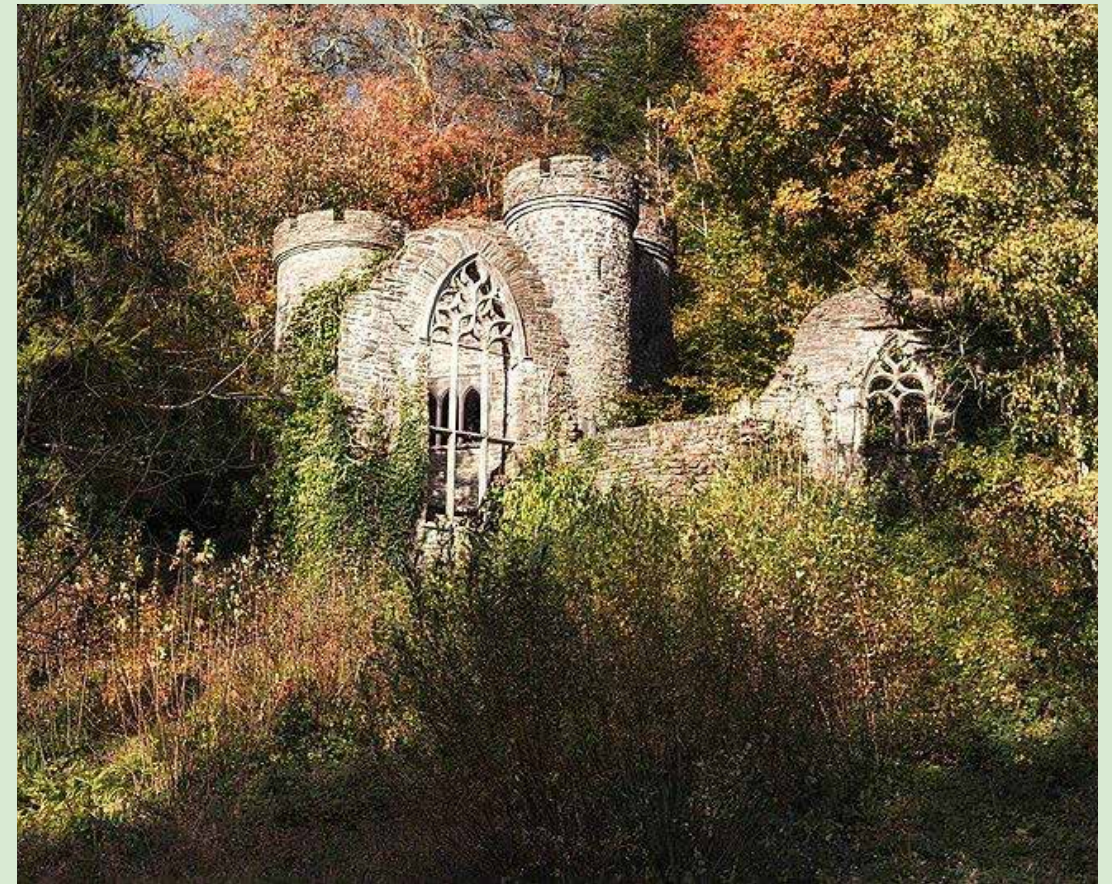


The Girl In The Woods

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Written & illustrated by

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Chapter 1 - The Woods



Deep in the darkening woods, a girl sat under the old trees, sheltering from the howling wind, not knowing what the night would have to offer.

Rachel got up and walked down the muddy, squelching path to a clear spring lake.

She sighed, as the wind suddenly dropped and a cool breeze touched her light hair. The clear night was breathtaking, with stars twinkling above her as far as her eyes could see. It looked like an ink black carpet was laid at night.

Suddenly, a twig cracked and snapped. She knew instantly that something was wrong. She was not alone. Everything seemed to change so quickly.

The leaves became stale; the water didn't look as inviting as before. Slowly, she turned around, and saw that a hole had appeared at her feet.

Panicking, she slid her feet backwards to stop herself sliding into the black space before her.

Silence was everywhere except the hammering of her heart ringing in her ears. Rachel took a deep breath, aware she needed to calm herself. Looking into the hole, she could see a cloth which looked like it was wrapped around something small. What was in it?

Chapter 2 - The Stone



Rachel reached into the deep, gloomy hole, her fingers gripping the cloth and she pulled it toward her. It unravelled! Just as it did, the wind started howling once more, seeming to say,

"Revenge awaits you, if you don't return what's mine!"

Rachel listened intently.

Nothing.

She didn't understand what had just happened - anxiously, she looked in the palm of her hand and, to her surprise, she saw a strange stone.

She put it in her pocket and left. She knew the way by heart.

Unexpectedly, there was a fork in the road that hadn't been there before. Rachel wondered why it was there.

She was confident that she should turn left. Little did she know that wasn't the case.

She stumbled through bogs and tripped on tree stumps.

Chapter 3 - The Castle



Eventually, Rachel came to a large lake of murky green water, which appeared to have lumps of mud and damp vines in it .

She found herself outside a castle. It looked like a lair, for it had ivy growing up the side, but also abandoned because the windows were cracked and shattered.

Rachel wondered whether she should go into the mysterious castle and whether it had anything to do with the being she had sensed in the woods. Was it their lair? Curiosity got the better of her and she decided she would go in. But how?

Wandering around the perimeter of the castle, her options to get in seemed to be a high window, a crack in the wall or the solid drawbridge. Rachel found no clues about who the castle belonged to, or whether they were there or not. It was getting dark and there was a sinister feel about the place.

What choice did she have but to seek shelter inside?

Rachel used her hands to make the crack bigger. Afterwards they were sore and aching. She crept into the castle, her heart beating wildly in her chest.

The wall was draped with old tapestries. The draft made its way in behind Rachel.

She stepped forward, leaves scattered around the dusty floor blown in by the wind. The floorboards

creaked "Eeee" and something small scuttled across her foot. A couple of mice ran across the floor. She squealed, jumping up and down as they ran into a crack in the wall.

Rachel was puzzled - where had they gone? She strode across the room in deep thought, then sat down on a dusty, old armchair with loose thread. She took out the cloth. Inside, she saw the stone was a piece of Jade - it was dark emerald green with stripes of light green running through it.

Then, a dark shadow came from a misty hallway that looked like it stretched back in time.

Rachel bellowed, "Who's there? Who are you? Answer me!"

Chapter 4 - Socrates



"I am Socrates and I want your stone!" the being exclaimed, glancing at the bump in Rachel's pocket.

"Why do you want the stone?"

Socrates lunged at Rachel, showing himself as he came out of the shadows. He had short jet black hair with pale white skin and his eyes were blood red.

When Rachel looked at him, it felt as if her soul had just been sucked out.

For quite some time, Rachel dodged all of Socrates' attempts to grab her and get what was in her pocket. Rachel knew she had to think of a plan that might just save her.

Eventually, Rachel thought of a cunning plan but how would she get it ready in time? She wondered why he wanted the stone, why was this stone so special and why had the hole opened up for her?

Chapter 5 - The Big Trick

Rachel found a column and snuck behind it, breathing hesitantly. She had a plan to keep the stone and get rid of Socrates. Now all she needed to do was bring it to life.

She scooped up some boggy mud and shaped it to match the piece of Jade sitting on top of her hand. All that was left to do was make the stripes. She pulled some grass and tied it onto the hardening ball of mud.

Rachel dashed out of her hiding spot and began sprinting across the room, dropping the fake stone.

Socrates ran for the "stone", clutching it in his hands and then slowly slipped back into the shadows.

Confused and somewhat relieved, Rachel rushed back home to her family. Luckily, the road was back to normal.

Chapter 6 - Homecoming

Rachel took the beautiful Jade stone home to her family. Her mother and father asked her what had happened and where she had been.

Rachel told her parents everything. Her dad said "Well, we're so glad you're home safely and have returned with the magical Jade stone."

"The magical Jade stone? What do you mean?" asked Rachel, flabbergasted.

"It's time we told you the truth. Whoever has the stone can determine whether the land is peaceful or dark. Our family have been guardians of the Jade stone for generations. We knew it was in the woods somewhere and that it appears when our world is under threat.

“We did not tell you because knowing about the stone places you at risk from others. Socrates and his tribe have been trying to get the Jade stone for many years. The Jade stone has shown itself to you, and you have shown great courage to bring the stone home”.

“Now, we can guide the land peacefully and fairly once again. We must be vigilant, it is only a matter of time before Socrates discovers he has a pile of mud and grass.”



This project was co-ordinated and facilitated by Clare Ford, Founder of Switched ON! the global online academy which is re-defining education beyond academic success.

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SWITCHED ON!

A young girl, Rachel, is whisked away to the woods, where she comes across a piece of Jade. Little does she know that having this stone could change her life forever.

Read on to find out what happens next.

