

THE QUEST OF THE RAINBOW DRAGONS: A UU Hero's Story

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PART I Installment Two: Rainbow Principle 1: Red for "Respect people" or "Each person is important" or "*We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people ...*"

Our story thus far ..

In the midst of dangerous and dreadful times, while safe in the castle by the sea belonging to an unusually peaceful ruler, Lord Sigismund, a young sorcerer called Marita found a prophecy involving the Pearl of Wisdom. Though Sigismund and the sorcerer were able to locate the pearl, its magic lay dormant until a young kitchen boy named Jared picked it up to clean it. The pearl began to sing, announcing Jared's identity as the one chosen to bring peace and prosperity to the land. Marita then asked Jared to go with her to speak to Lord Sigismund and his advisors

Our story continues ..

When Marita first brought Jared to the council chamber, Lord Sigismund and his advisors were a bit skeptical. How could a kitchen boy succeed where the best and brightest grown ups and even Lord Sigismund himself had failed

But the pearl worked almost as if it were on a switch. When Jared touched it, the song rang out with great clarity and beauty. The second he put it down or handed it to someone else, it went completely quiet. Eventually, even the most skeptical people were convinced

Marita, meanwhile, had opened up the book, *The Prophecy of the Rainbow Dragons*, and was reading it aloud to anyone who would listen. "It says, 'On the first quest, one alone will surely fail. The journey requires three. First, the companion must be chosen carefully. Choose wrong, the quest will fail. Choose not by size or strength or capabilities, but by heart. If you choose correctly, then the guide will come to show the way.' "

Marita looked up. "But who chooses? And how do you choose by heart? This is such an important decision, and we have so little information to go on!"

Around the table sat the smartest people in this little country by the sea, not least of which was Lord Sigismund himself. They discussed and argued, and argued and discussed, and went around and around in circles for so long that Jared found himself dozing off, the pearl still in his hand. When he fell asleep completely, it rolled onto the ground, and the music stopped, but no one even noticed they were arguing so much

When the Captain of the Guard slapped the table to make a particular point, Jared woke with a start. Seeing the pearl on the ground, he became very upset. He took a deep breath and hollered, "QUIET DOWN!" Amazingly, they all did.

"Why are you *arguing* so much?" he asked, somewhat angrily.

"Well," answered Lord Sigismund, "We can't seem to agree on who or how your companion should be chosen - never mind who that companion might be. The Captain of the Guard, here believes you ought to be assigned our strongest warrior ..."

"That's right!" interrupted the Captain of the Guard. "Dragons are tough and mighty tricky beasts, and they'll eat a wee boy like you for midday snack and then go lookin' for a couple of cows for supper. You need someone big and strong to go with you to do the slayin'. Surely, that's what the prophecy means."

"*Dragons?!!?*" Jared gasped. But before he could say more, one of the older wizards broke in.

"Not at all! Dragons are creatures of magic. The companion must be a sorcerer - possibly even the Lady Marita - for she found the prophecy after all," said a graybearded man in sweeping purple robes. Jared figured he must be the head sorcerer.

"What prophecy?" asked Jared. But nobody listened.

"Hah!" said a man dressed in grimy leather. "You softies wouldn't last a moment on the open road. I've traveled farther than any living person. Who better to accompany the lad on what's sure to be a long and difficult journey?"

"*A long and difficult journey????*" Jared's confusion was starting to be replaced by a growing anxiety.

"Perhaps the leading authority on dragons?" snapped a woman with thick glasses. "My colleague, here, has assembled not one but *three* complete skeletons, and has observed dragons for years. Why, she even managed to get close to a nesting mother and watch her care for the dragonets! Surely, she would be the best choice?"

While Jared sat there, stunned, terrified, and extremely curious as to what might come next, the advisors continued to argue.

"Friends, let me remind you," said Marita, shaking her head, " 'Not by size or strength or capabilities - but by heart.' I think it's up to Jared to decide. Jared, what does your heart tell you?"

"HOW CAN I KNOW WHEN I HAVEN'T SPENT ANY TIME WITH ANY OF THESE PEOPLE? WHEN I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I'M GOING OR WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DOING? AND HOW CAN I EVEN BEGIN TO FIGURE IT OUT WHEN YOU ARE ALL BEING SO DARNED NOISY!" Jared was shocked and embarrassed by his outburst. He'd just yelled at the most important people in the land! They were going to throw him into the dungeon for sure!

The council chamber was silent for a while. Then, "*Excellent* observation!" announced Lord Sigismund. "I begin to see why you are the chosen one! Why don't we give you a week with each of these four candidates, and if, at the end of the month you don't know who to take with you, we'll find you some more, and keep on trying 'til we get it right." He looked up and addressed the whole gathering. "After all, we've waited twelve years so far. If the success of the quest depends on this companion, Jared should take his time and choose carefully."

And so it was decided. After a good night's sleep, Jared began to spend time with each of the four candidates. The warrior taught him the basics of sword technique, and had a surprising sense of humor. Jared learned a great deal, but wasn't sure at the end of the week whether or not this burly man was the right companion. When Jared nervously gave the rugged soldier the news, he laughed, and said, "I had a great time gettin' to know ya. Here, I want ta give ya my old practice sword. It's just the right size, and I'd be honored to have ya carry it on your journey."

Next, he spent time with Lady Marita. The sorceress was lovely, and in addition to her magical abilities, she had a great deal of common sense. She taught Jared all she knew about the prophecy, and patiently answered all of his questions about the marvelous things that filled her tower room. But while Jared learned quite a bit

from her during their week together, at the end, he still wasn't sure. "I'm sorry," he said to Lady Marita.

She smiled at him and laid her hand on his shoulder. "You're a bright boy, Jared. I know you'll make the right choice. Here, let me give you this little flute you liked so much. Perhaps you can learn to play it on your journey."

Next, Jared spent a week with the traveler, who entertained him mightily with stories of far away places, and showed him lots of tricks for getting out of tight spots. They got along quite well, and Jared was amazed at how the traveler could put together a delicious meal with next to no supplies. At the end of the week, though, Jared still felt conflicted. The explorer presented him with a rucksack and a compass to take with him. "No strings attached, bud. These'll come in handy no matter who you choose."

Finally, he got to meet the great dragon scholar, who shared everything she knew and even took him up to watch a dragon hunting for food - from a safe distance, of course.

"They're really quite gentle, you see," she said earnestly. "They have to eat, and they're quite large, but given a choice, they much prefer fish to red meat. I don't believe they'd ever attack a human unless they felt threatened." Jared wasn't quite sure he believed her, nor was he sure she was the right companion. At the end of the week, she gave him a copy of her book, *Patterns of Dragon Behavior*, and pulled him to her in a rough hug. "You'll do just fine, my boy. You've a good eye and an open mind."

That night, Jared's brain felt full to overflowing. He had no idea who to choose as his companion. After a long time of tossing and turning, he found himself walking to the room of his best friend, Delia.

Delia had wildly curly dark hair and skin the color of caramel. Her eyes were an unusual shade of green. She and Jared had worked together in the kitchen, and played together when they had free time, and he had missed her these past few busy weeks.

Delia was delighted to see him and super curious to hear all about the pearl and the quest.

He told her all about everything that had happened to him, and shared his dilemma with her. She brought him up to date on all the gossip in the castle, and took him to see the new kittens out in the barn. They had a wonderful time, but after a couple of hours, they were both pretty tired and decided to head off to bed. "Do you know yet who you'll take on your great journey? Oh, I wish I could go with you!" she said.

"I wish you could too, with all my heart," he replied. And just like that, he knew: *Delia was the proper companion.* "You know, Delia, I just realized how much I count on you and your friendship. I can't think of anyone I'd rather have with me. Will you come with me?"

Delia shook her head. "You can't mean that, Jared. You should take someone older, with more skills or knowledge. Goodness, you learned so much from each of your new friends! Why don't you take one of them?"

Jared smiled and took her hand. "Because you're the person I know the best, the person I trust the most, the person I most want to spend time with. I couldn't possibly leave you behind to scrub pots while I go on this adventure.

Please, will you come with me?" Delia finally agreed, and they decided to go the next morning to Lord Sigismund to tell him of Jared's decision.

Many of the councilors were horrified. "A kitchen girl? When he could take along anyone at all?"

Surprisingly, Jared's most vocal allies were the people who had most hoped to go with him. "He needs to trust his heart," said Lady Marita. "They'll do just fine," seconded the soldier. "It's ingenious, really. Who'd hurt a couple of kids?" smiled the explorer.

"Certainly no dragon would attack young people!" added the scholar.

Finally, Lord Sigismund held up a hand to end the conversation. "He has chosen with his heart. It is surely the right choice, and it is Jared's to make. It is done."

The silence that followed Lord Sigismund's pronouncement was broken, finally, by a loud knocking at the door. Jared went over and opened the door to reveal a very dirty, very smelly, rather funny looking little creature. Puzzled he asked, "Who are you?" The creature replied, "I'm the guide, of course!"

***Dragon Task:** This week, tell the people you love how you feel about them; thank them for the things they've taught you and tell them why they're so wonderful.*