

**Installment Three: Rainbow Principle 1 is the color Red. Red reminds us to Respect people**

*Each person is important....*

*We covenant to affirm & promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people ...*

*Our story thus far ...*

Once upon a time, not so very far away, in an attempt to make the world a better and more peaceful place, the inhabitants of a kingdom by the sea, led by Lord Sigismund, have unearthed an old book entitled The Prophecy of the Rainbow Dragons. In accordance with the prophecy, they have retrieved the Pearl of Wisdom, which, much to their surprise, confirms that a simple kitchen boy named Jared is the Chosen One, destined to go on the quest for peace and prosperity. They are further surprised when he chooses another young person, his best friend Delia, to go with him on the journey. When last we met, a strange and funny-smelling little creature has arrived at the gates to announce that he is to guide Jared and Delia on their quest to find the first dragon.

*Our story continues ...*

The important people assembled in the council chamber were struck dumb by the appearance of this strange, smelly little beast. At first they didn't say a word. Then they began to whisper among themselves, which made Jared rather uncomfortable. Though he felt sure that someone important ought to have done it first, he finally just took a step forward and stuck out his hand.

"Hello, then, my name's Jared, and this is my friend Delia. What's your name?"

"You can call me 'Les,' kiddo. Pleased ta' meet ya."

Les had big tufty ears and a rather saggy belly. His whole body was covered in very dirty fur. It was muddy and clumped in places, and he smelled as if he'd been rolling in dead fish. His eyes, though, were a luminous silvery color that looked green one moment, blue the next, then purple, then pink. In fact, as Jared looked closer, his eyes had the same swirling, dancing quality as the Pearl of Wisdom.

"So you've got the pearl, then, and found your companion. Do you think I could hear the music, just for a minute?" asked Les.

"Oh, of course," said Jared, and fumbled in the pouch at his waist where he kept the pearl. As usual, as soon as his hand touched its surface, the most beautiful music filled the room. Les closed his eyes and swayed in place, and all the counselors,

sorcerers and other advisors felt the soothing music wash away their worry, fear, and disgust, and leave in its place a feeling of deep and lovely peace.

After a little while, Les opened his eyes and nodded, and Jared placed the pearl back in the pouch. The tense moment had passed, and Lord Sigismund himself offered a hand to the odd little creature and said, "Welcome to my home. Surely, you are weary from your journey here. Would you like to take a minute to wash up and relax? Then perhaps we can discuss what you'll need for your journey."

"No time to talk. No need for much of anything." said Les.

Marita, bursting with curiosity, started asking questions right away. "How did you know to come? How did you manage to get here just as Jared chose Delia for his companion? Are you familiar with the Prophecy of the Rainbow Dragons? Do you know where to find Krasnova, the Red Dragon mentioned in the prophecy? And what is Jared meant to do when he gets there? The prophecy is rather vague on that point."

"Whoa, slow down, little lady," said Les. "I know you are all wondering how I got here and what comes next, but I'm not allowed to tell you, and you probably wouldn't believe me if I could, anyway. Even if you would, we don't have time. Now that the pearl's begun to sing, we've got less than a year to finish the quest. Lots to do, lots of places to go, lots of people to meet. Well, boy, you ready to go?" He turned to look at Jared with a twinkle in his eye.

Jared closed his mouth, which had dropped open at this last question. "Ready to go? I ... I ... Don't we have to plan our trip, and pack our things, and put together parcels of food, and things?"

Les let out an impatient, "Humph. We travel light, find food on the road. Just grab a couple of things and stuff 'em in your rucksack. We should leave within the hour. Now, if you kind folk will excuse me, there are some kittens out in the barn I'm to check in on while I'm here."

"But, where are we going? How did you know about the kittens? *Who* and *what* are you, Les?" burst out Delia.

"What's with the questions? Time's a-wasting. Get going, you two, get along! Ladies. Gentlemen." And with a quick bow, he jumped down from the chair and vanished.

The councilors and sorcerers were quite disturbed by Les's abrupt manner. And so it was that amidst disgruntled mutterings ("Where did he go? How dare he leave

without answering our questions?”), Jared and Delia bowed their way out of the council chamber and went sprinting off to their respective rooms to gather a few belongings. Into his rucksack, Jared put a spare set of clothes, the book on dragons from the scholar, the little silver flute from Marita, a good sharp knife, and the compass the explorer had given him. Then he turned to look at his treasure box.

Now, Jared didn't have treasure in the way of gold or jewels. He was a simple kitchen boy. But in his free time, he'd walked on the shore and found beautiful shells. He'd wandered in the forest, and picked up discarded feathers and oddly shaped bits of wood. He'd meandered by the riverbank, and gathered beautiful stones worn smooth by the water. The most special, the most beautiful of the things he'd gathered he put into a small wooden box. When he felt lonely or sad or angry, he'd go through his treasure box and hold his treasures in his hand, and remember the way he felt when he'd found them.

In the bottom of the box lay a small, worn blanket, too small for a boy but just right for a baby. His birth mother had woven the blanket of softest wool, and had wrapped him in it to keep him warm when he was a newborn. It was the only thing he had left of her. When even his rocks, feathers, and shells didn't bring him peace, he would pull out the blanket and rub it against his cheek, then wrap it around his shoulders and imagine her love, and the love of his parents, surrounding him. It never failed to calm him down. The soft blanket cushioned the box and kept his treasures safe. The thought of leaving it, and the box, behind hurt his heart, and so into the rucksack it went.

A quick detour to the kitchens for a couple of loaves of bread, a jug of cool water, and quick goodbyes for his friends and Jared raced down to the gate, where a row of Important People stood to wish the travelers well. Delia had packed faster and stood waiting, an excited and nervous smile on her face. In her rucksack were spare clothes, warm socks, and a raincoat. She had packed her toothbrush, her hairbrush, and a small cake of soap wrapped in a cloth she could use for washing up. She had also brought *her* most treasured possessions - a small, blank sketchbook, two charcoal pencils, and an eraser. Delia loved to draw and paint.

The oldest sorcerer cleared his throat as if he were about to give a speech, but just then Les popped back into view.

“No speeches!! Who are you kidding! The kids are in good hands, now. Just say goodbye and we'll be on our way.” Hastily, each Important Person shook Jared's hand or patted his head, and did the same for Delia. However, Marita and Lord Sigismund both pulled Jared and Delia into warm hugs, instead.

"Be careful," said Marita, "and come home safe."

"I have faith in you," said Lord Sigismund simply, looking deep into Jared's eyes.

"Right then. We're off," announced Les. He turned and jogged through the gate.

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The three travelers walked for several days, stopping at churches and farms to eat. Delia and Jared were amazed at how many people seemed to know and care about Les, greeting the strange little creature with warm smiles and a great degree of respect. Everywhere they went, they were treated as honored guests, simply because they were companions of Les's.

They had gotten used to Les's fishy smell, and had become quite comfortable with him. Les treated all people and animals with a gentleness that made Jared and Delia feel safe and warm inside. Instinctively, they began to speak and act with extra kindness and gentleness as well.

Eventually, they came to the edge of a thick forest, with high trees so close together that their branches were interwoven. Far in the distance, they could see a high and rugged mountain range.

"This is as far as I can take you," said Les quietly.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!?!!" responded Jared, and Delia - almost in unison.

"Well, there's rules kiddos! I can't break them any more than you! If the dragons catch wind of me too soon, the whole quest goes out the window!"

"But ... but ..." stammered Jared.

"No buts about it. You'll be fine! Just trust your instincts," replied Les, matter-of-factly.

"Beyond those woods lies the mountain home of Krasnova, the Red Dragon. Do you remember what the prophecy says about your task, Jared?" Jared closed his eyes and thought hard, trying to picture the big, dusty old book with the prophecy in it open to the page that described the first dragon. "Krasnova's a mighty dragon, living in ruby caves. The chosen one ..."

"That'd be you," Delia put in.

"I, I must claim her tongue and her heart." continued Jared.

"Almost," corrected Les. "You must *win* her tongue and *then* her heart. The order's important."

"Is that, is that the order that I have to ... cut parts of her out? After, after I kill her? But how can I possibly defeat a mighty dragon? I've only this small sword, and I'm not very good at using it yet," ventured Jared quietly.

Les sighed deeply, and shook his head. "I'm not allowed to tell you any more, Jared. From here, you and Delia are on your own. Our hopes rest in your hands, young ones. Use your compass to show you the way." And with that, Les simply faded away into invisibility. His eyes - those pearly, unusually luminous eyes - were the last part of him they could see.

***Dragon Task:*** *Think about what you would take on a journey if you had to travel light. Ask at least one other person what they would take.*