

Installment Four: 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 ...

In the midst of dark and dangerous times, in a land not too far from here, a group of people gathered in the castle of Lord Sigismund are trying to bring peace to the land. The Pearl of Wisdom has chosen a boy named Jared to undertake a dangerous quest described in an ancient book called The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons, which contains a long and involved prophecy which just might help bring peace and prosperity to the hurting people. Jared has chosen his friend Delia to accompany him on this quest, and a strange furry creature with big ears and a potbelly who calls himself Les has come to serve as their guide. Les, Jared, and Delia left the castle of Lord Sigismund in search of the first dragon mentioned by the prophecy - the great Red Dragon, Krasnova. At the edge of a wood, Les has vanished to let the children travel the last little bit by themselves.

Our story continues

After a long day of walking, Delia and Jared decided to stop for the night. When they woke up, their ankles were tied together, and their hands were tied behind their back. Six strange, rough reptilian looking creatures with sharp spears were watching them intently.

When Jared and Delia started to struggle and cry out, "Let us go! Who are you? What do you want with us?" the creatures began to confer in a strange language full of hisses and crackling sounds. It looked as if they were arguing about something.

Finally, Jared and Delia were unceremoniously picked up and thrown over scaly, hard shoulders. After what seemed like hours of uncomfortable, upside-down travel, they arrived at what looked like a village. The huts were made of mud and straw, with low, circular entrances. Jared and Delia were handed down, feet first, into one of the huts and then set off to one side with their backs against a firm, curved surface that they thought must be the wall. Before their eyes had completely adjusted to the dim light that trickled in through the thatched roof, a rough and raspy voice spoke from the shadows.

"Human children, why have you trespassed in our forest?"

Gulping and then taking a deep breath, Jared answered, "We are on our way to the mountains, on a quest to find the Red Dragon Krasnova."

Jared heard one voice making the hissing, clacking sounds that he assumed were the language of the forest creatures, and then he heard an outburst from many different voices all together. He thought, *the one in the corner must be translating what I've said for the others!*

"We have guarded this forest for many years from greedy, vicious humans seeking to steal Krasnova's rubies. Always before, those who came were full-grown, and well armed. You are small, and you have only this *toy*," he motioned toward the practice sword, which, next to the huge, dangerous spears of the forest creatures, did look rather like a toy. "That is why you were spared. But you are just like the others in your greed. Those who come to our forest seeking treasure must be killed. That is the way."

It was Delia who found the courage to speak. "Please, sir," she said, "We're not seeking treasure. The aim of our quest is to bring peace and prosperity to the land. We have no need for rubies. If we promise to leave the treasure alone, will you let us continue?"

Again, the older creature translated, and then the lot of them chattered away for a time.

Finally, the old one croaked out, "If not for rubies, why do you seek the Great Dragon?"

Jared swallowed hard. He didn't know what to say but the truth. After taking a deep breath, he spoke carefully: "I don't know, exactly. We found a prophecy that says I must complete seven tasks in order to bring peace to the world. Finding Krasnova is the first task. It says I must win her tongue and then her heart. I don't want to hurt her; I don't want to hurt anybody. I just want to bring an end to the suffering and the wars."

After the old one translated, the chattering started again, louder than ever. When the translator began to speak, Jared crossed his fingers behind his back. "We do not understand this quest of yours, and we cannot let you harm Krasnova. You will remain tied, and you must leave your toy sword here." "We can take you to see her. You may speak to her of your quest. She is wise beyond all wisdom, so perhaps she will understand where we do not. If she wills you live, you shall live, but we will kill you should she ask it. Or, we can offer you safe passage out of the forest. We do not wish to kill children. You must choose."

Delia looked at Jared. Jared looked at Delia. "We've come so far," she said. "And the stakes are high. I think we have to try."

Swallowing hard, Jared agreed. "Take us to Krasnova," he said to the old one.

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The journey up to the Krasnova's cave took quite a long time. Jared and Delia were allowed to walk, but their hands remained tied. It took every ounce of strength and concentration they possessed to stay moving and to keep from falling as they clambered over the steep, rocky ground. At the entrance to the cave the translator, the children and two guards left the rest of the creatures behind and walked into the smelly, dark cave.

They came around a corner and saw what looked like a great, glittering, curved wall. The translator called out loudly in a deep, groaning sigh. Then he lowered himself to the ground. He said to the children, "I have called her." After quite a long while, the wall in front of them began to pulse, and then slide. Jared and Delia watched it move. The top of the cave opened up first, and as the wall became shorter and shorter, they realized that what they had thought was a wall was actually a tail - the tail of an enormous Red Dragon. It was Krasnova .

She sat in a chamber that was bigger than their whole town back home. Krasnova was simply enormous, at least fifty times larger than the dragons described in Jared's book. Her head was the size of a house. Her wings, if extended, would have sheltered acres of land. Jared and Delia were simply stunned. Then Krasnova blinked her enormous eyes and began to speak, in a voice that shook the very mountain.

Rather than groans and sighs, the dragon-speech sounded like thunderstorms and tornados, earthquakes and tidal waves. The translator listened carefully, then turned to Jared and Delia. "She asks why you have come and disturbed her rest. She is tired, and cares no longer for the trials and tribulations of humans."

Jared took a deep breath, and closed his eyes for just a minute. When he opened them, he began to speak, straight from the heart. "I am here because I believe in hoping, and I believe in helping. It's beautiful here in your mountain, and quiet, I know, but in the world outside people are hurting, and angry, and confused. I never thought I could be someone who could help them, but when it turned out that I was needed, I had to try."

The translator held up a hand, and spoke to the dragon. Jared looked at Delia, who smiled encouragingly. When the translator had finished, Jared looked up into the dragon's huge, luminous eyes and continued.

"Now that I see you, see how vast and magnificent you are, I could never hurt you. Yet when I think of all the kind people back in the castle, the generous people who housed and fed us on our journey here, I know I have to try to fulfill the prophecy, have to try to win your tongue and then your heart for my people. The guardians of the forest say you are wise, and I can tell that they are right, and that you are older than time, too. So, please, mighty Krasnova, please, help me find a way to succeed in my quest. Help me bring peace to the hurting world." The dragon sat silently for a moment, blinked her huge eyes, and then began to turn away.

"NO!" shouted Jared. "Please! You must help!"

But the dragon was not leaving. She began, instead to circle, faster and faster, until she looked like a dazzling red whirlwind, taller and wider than any tree. The gusts of air caused by her spinning nearly knocked Jared and Delia over, but they supported each other, and planted their feet, and stood strong until suddenly, the wind died, and in place of the enormous dragon stood a beautiful ruby carved into the shape of a woman.

Jared's jaw dropped as the woman stepped toward him, and with a smile, extended her hands. The ropes binding their wrists fell away, and so Jared was able to take one of Krasnova's hands, and Delia the other. The feeling they got when they touched her felt very much like the feeling they got when the Pearl of Wisdom sang. Happiness, peace, joy, and love filled their hearts to overflowing.

This time, when the woman spoke, they could hear and understand her clearly, though her lips didn't move. "Children, I cannot hold this form for long anymore, but I will try - for you. I have watched your people as, generation after generation, their spirits became twisted by greed and violence. I gave up years ago trying to spread kindness and respect among your kind. I thought it hopeless.

"By facing your fear and speaking honestly to my guardians you earned the right to see me and speak your truth. When my old friend here agreed to translate your words, you won my tongue. Then your bravery and selflessness touched my heart. You have awakened in me the old longing to plant love and compassion in the world. If there are even a few left who long for peace, I have no right to stay hidden in these mountains." "Yet my powers on their own will not be sufficient to restore the peace. You must also call upon my sisters and brothers - the other dragons. I give you, now,

my heart." She handed Jared a stone, shaped like a heart, bright and shiny red. It felt warm in his hand.

The dragon continued, "When it is time, hold the heart in your hand and call my name. I promise I will come. Now go, Jared. Go, Delia. Know that you are loved, and that you travel with my blessing." Between one breath and the next, the ruby woman was gone, and the giant dragon coiled in her place. She winked one enormous eye as Jared, Delia and their guides turned to leave. The two reptilian guards hissed and clacked wildly, looking at the children with new respect.

Jared worried that he'd not accomplished what he needed to do, but as they left the cave and entered into the sunlight again, he heard a voice whisper, "Well done, chosen one. The first task is complete."

He turned to Delia. "Did you hear that?"

Smiling, she said. "Hear what? Wasn't Krasnova amazing? I want to paint her someday, both as a dragon and as a woman." She started to talk about the colors she would use, the techniques she might try to at least hint at the beauty of the dragon's scales and eyes.

Jared realized, then, that the voice had spoken in his heart, and a sense of peace and accomplishment settled over him, and strengthened him for the next part of his quest.

Dragon Task: *Have you ever faced your fears, and then been proud of your own courage? Tell someone about it, and then ask them to tell you about a time they faced their fear, too.*