

Installment ten: Yellow: Yearn to Learn (about ourselves, others, and the mystery)  
*We affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.*

*Our story thus far...* An ordinary kitchen boy name Jared has become the somewhat unlikely hero foreseen in an ancient prophecy entitled The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons. Having completed the first two of seven required tasks described in the prophecy, he has departed from the Greek city of Alexandria en route to the lost land of Atlantis, in hopes of completing the third. With him are his best friend, Delia, a short, furry creature named Lou, who is somewhat magical and their guide on these quests, and an Alexandrian librarian named Polly.

*Continued...*

Jared, Delia, Lou and Polly were sitting with Captain Petroklus and his first mate, Yakoff, at the dinner table, discussing the destination of their journey.

“I’m telling you,” said Petroklus, banging his hand on the table. “There’s no such place as Atlantis. It’s a myth. There’s nothing there!”

“Tell us again what you think to try?” asked Yakoff, who had a much calmer way of speaking than his captain.

Lou’s mouth was full, and Jared was staring off into space, and so Delia answered Yakoff’s question. “Polly found us an old story about a man who may have found a way to get to Atlantis.”

“He fell overboard somewhere in the midst of these islands, here,” and she went to the map and pointed to a group of remote, uninhabited islands far away from all other lands. “He got disoriented while he was swimming, and wound up on, wait a minute, let me look at my notes, ‘a barren, rocky island no bigger than the courtyard of my home, shaped like dragon’s head.’ He had no food, no water, and thought he would die there, except the next day, at low tide, he glimpsed a sea cave. He waded in, thinking he might be able to find something to eat, and instead found a long passageway. Polly, remind me what happened next?”

“Oh,” the young library clerk spoke, startled. She had been sad and distracted for most of the journey, missing her home and her beloved library books. “He claims to have followed the cave for many miles. The walls had an eerie, faint glow. From some sort of lichen, I think he said. He went as far as he could, and then, tired, he turned around and headed home. He was rescued the next day. The only thing he could say about the cave was that it went on and on, and that at the furthest point in his explorations, he could hear a rushing sound, like a waterfall.”

“Exactly!” interjected Delia. “We believe that this sea cave is the entrance to Atlantis.”

So it was that after a very long journey, the four travelers were rowed to the shore of an island that did, indeed, look like a dragon’s head. They could only land at high tide, and so they built a fire on high ground and waited for the water to recede so that they could enter the sea cave,

located in the mouth of the dragon. Captain Petroklus had given them supplies, and then taken his ship to a neighboring island, much bigger, with food and fresh water and a safe cove. He and his men would circle the rocky island every three days to see if the travelers had returned.

“I’m so excited!” said Delia, eager to get started on this newest adventure. “I can’t wait to see the library in Atlantis!”

“We’ve got a long way to go before we get there,” Lou replied calmly, “and no guarantee that this is the right place.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jared suddenly. “You’re the guide. Before now, you’ve always known where to go!”

“Well, this is uncharted territory, even for me. Frankly, I haven’t known for sure where to go. I’ve just made my best guess. We’re just lucky that so far, I’ve guessed right,” Lou retorted.

When low tide came, they clambered into the sea cave and began walking down the damp, slippery slope. Sure enough, the cave walls glowed, just as the story had described. “This is fascinating!” said Lou. “A bioluminescent lichen that grows with no sunlight whatsoever. Do you know what a find this is?”

“Should we attempt to bring some back with us?” asked Polly.

“Not a bad idea...maybe on our way back I can try and flake some off. If I keep it cool and damp, it might survive the journey back. Then I could give it to a miner friend of mine.”

“Lou, shouldn’t we be focusing on our quest, not making side trips to deliver lichen?” said Jared, a little irritably.

“Not far out of our way at all, actually. Our next quest takes us to “The Ring of Fire,” which I believe is near the diamond mines of Drakar, where my miner friend lives. Fact is, this lichen might help us on that part of our quest. You never know!”

They walked for quite a while. Finally, the tunnel began to widen, and the sound of water got louder and louder. They came around a corner and entered a huge chamber that housed a vast, underground lake. In the distance, they could hear rushing water. “What do we do now?” asked Jared.

“I don’t know. Let’s sleep on it,” answered Lou, and began to set up camp. Jared sighed, and gave him a hand. They ate in silence and then lay down to rest.

Jared woke before the others. He went and sat on the edge of the water, pondering how to get across. After a while, he heard a voice from the water. “Hey there.”

“Hello,” answered Jared politely, turning toward the voice. Then he pulled back in shock. A sea turtle was gazing at him with liquid, brown eyes.

“You’re looking at the lake as if it holds the answers to the deep questions. It probably does. Have you seen any yet?”

“I must be dreaming,” Jared thought. He said out loud, “No. I’m just wondering if it’s possible to get across. We need to find the Library of Atlantis, and we’re hoping it’s somewhere over there.”

“It probably is,” the turtle said calmly. “Would you like climb on? I’ll swim you on over so that you can check it out.”

“Yes!” said Jared...but then he remembered his friends. “I need to talk it over with my friends first,” he said. He thought he saw an approving glimmer in the turtle’s eyes.

“I’ll wait here, then,” the turtle said. Jared ran back toward the camp, calling out excitedly. “Delia! Polly! Lou! There’s a turtle here that says it can get us across the lake. Wake up! We have to go!”

They woke up immediately, and ran down after Jared to meet the turtle. Polly realized the problem first. “Jared,” she said, “the turtle can only take one of us at a time.”

“Yup,” said the turtle. “Even that’ll be a bit tricky.”

“Now what?” asked Delia, looking at Lou.

“Well...only one of us can go on. I guess it needs to be Jared.”

“You’ll wait here?” asked Jared, worried.

“Yes,” said Lou. “Plenty of water, and I bet I can catch us some fish for dinner. I think we even passed a little bit of driftwood, and the roof of this cavern is high enough I bet I could build a little cook fire. You go on ahead, Jared, and see if you can complete this next task, and we’ll just...wait.”

Jared stripped off his knapsack and his extra clothes, and waded into the water which was extremely cold. Shivering, he grabbed onto the turtle’s shell and they were off.

It seemed to take forever to cross the lake, and on the far side, Jared didn’t see anything that looked like a library. He figured he had to travel a little further, so he thanked the turtle, who offered to follow along for a while, and headed along the edge of the lake, looking for a tunnel or at least the source of the running water.

After a little while, he came to the edge of a river. “Ah,” he thought. “This is where the sound came from.” He peered into the darkness, wondering where the river went. He said it aloud... “I wonder where the river goes?”

“Only one way to find out,” said the turtle, and then it launched itself into the current, swimming calmly over the edge and vanishing into the dark. “Wait!” yelled Jared. “How will I get back to my friends? Help! Wait!”

No response. The turtle was gone, and Jared was alone, cold, and hungry. Could this be the end of his noble Quest?

With no better idea, he picked his way along the edge of the rushing water to the place where it vanished into another tunnel. He tried to peer around the edge...no luck. He called out, “Turtle? Are you there?” No answer. He tried to wade out into the water, but the current was too strong. Finally, he decided to sit down and wait.

He must have drifted off to sleep, because the next thing he knew, the turtle was nudging his foot, saying, “Hey! Hey, wake up!”

“What?” asked Jared, excited and relieved.

“We’ve got to go back. You need to bring the rest of ‘em.”

“What?” Jared was now confused.

“The lady dragon. She says there’s only one person she’ll talk to, and it’s not you. I’ll swim you across.”

After another long, cold swim, they arrived back at the camp where Delia, Lou, and Polly sat around a small fire. “What’s going on?” asked Lou.

“Turtle says he saw a dragon, and she says she’ll talk to one of us...but we need to all go over together.”

Polly cried out softly. Delia, Lou and Jared all turned to look at her. She had gotten very pale again. “I’m sorry, but I don’t know how...to swim.”

*Dragon Task:* Go exploring. Visit a place you’ve never been before, and find out one fact about that place.