

Installment sixteen: Green: Grow by exploring what is right and true in life.
We affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning...

Our story thus far...

Our hero and heroine, Jared and Delia, are in the midst of a long and difficult journey to complete seven tasks foretold in an ancient book titled The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons, a quest which, if completed successfully, will rain peace, love and justice down on the hurting world. Guided by Sanah, a daughter of the Emerald Tribes, they have arrived at the volcanic den of the Green dragon, Zelyonov...where the fourth task is to find the dragon's greatest weakness as well as his greatest strength, and to adopt both as their own.

Continued...

Zelyonov first spoke to Sanah, who nodded and sank to sit on the ground, cross legged. Then he turned and began to speak to Jared and Delia. "Your time is short. Sanah will stay with me for a time, and so she will wait while we finish our business. Then you can leave and return to your quest."

"Without Sanah?" asked Delia, worried.

"You will be able to find the way without her?" the dragon inquired politely. "If not, you will have to wait a year while I finish her training. No one can enter here more than once, so she cannot leave until it is complete."

"I think I can find the way," Jared reassured his friend and the mighty, mysterious green dragon whose home they had entered.

"So," said the dragon, "You are attempting to fulfill the Prophecy of the Rainbow Dragons. It's a challenging task for anyone, but especially for children like you." He sighed, almost wistfully.

"We're taking it one day at a time," said Delia. "At the moment, we're supposed to find your greatest weakness and your greatest strength, and then we're to claim them both as our own."

"Ah," said the dragon. "But the first question is easy. My greatest weakness is that I am blind."

"You're blind?" asked Jared, surprised. "How can that be? You are a powerful, magical creature. Surely you could cure your own blindness?"

The dragon settled down into a comfortable seated position. "I thought as you did for the first few centuries. I searched everywhere for a cure for my blindness. I used my ears, my nose, my sense of touch, my imagination, and my heart-vision to travel the world, searching. Unfortunately my search failed. I did learn much over the course of my travels; however, in the end, defeated, I chose to return here, and I created my sanctuary."

“Alone with my own thoughts, I mulled over what I had learned for another several centuries, acquiring, I believe, a certain level of wisdom. Perhaps that is my greatest strength, the wisdom?”

Jared paused for a moment to think, then asked the dragon, “Sir, would you share some of your wisdom with us?”

The dragon snorted. “You have but a few hours to spend here. I cannot possibly convey much of anything in such a brief span of time. But I will tell you that which I hope will help you in your quest the most.”

“First, every living thing must grow. The difference between a rock and a plant is that the plant is changing, always. Even I, here in my deep sanctuary, must keep learning and growing, or I would sink into oblivion. So...life is growth.”

“Second, the greatest barrier to growth is fear. People are afraid of change, afraid of the unknown, and they try to stop growth and change from happening. It’s impossible to do that without stopping life, but people try nonetheless. It seems to be inevitable.”

“Third, and most important, you can’t use fear to make people grow. Only love can help bring those barriers down. Meet people where they are, with acceptance and compassion, and then invite them, gently, to start growing again. Invite them out of the darkness and isolation that fear imposes upon them into the light, into the places where beauty and joy still abide.”

“It seems strange that you, who live in darkness, away from the world, would share that particular bit of wisdom with us.” said Delia. “Aren’t you lonely, here all by yourself, with just your thoughts to keep you company?”

“Of course,” answered the dragon. “That is why I began to call to the people who live nearest my sanctuary several hundred years ago. Every twenty years or so, one of them would hear my call and make the journey up to my cave. I would help them cross the lava lake, and we would talk for a time, after which, they would return to their people, and I would have another twenty years to mull over what they’d told me of the world outside. It’s a quiet existence, true, but it suits me. I think I have been able to help these people at least a little. Especially since I succeeded in calling a woman, the mother of the child who is here with you, I believe.”

“The Emerald tribes have, as you likely noticed, rather odd ideas about the status of women. It’s been my goal to change that for a long time; however, the men I called here did not see it as a problem. It took a woman...and she has done an admirable job, accomplished much in twenty two years. Her daughter will, I believe, continue with that work.”

“Zelyonov, sir,” asked Delia, “You told Sanah’s mother that we...that I...”

“That one would come across the desert with curly hair and green eyes, and that her child must lead that one and her companions to my lair? I’ve said that to all of the tribes people who have found their way here.”

“But,” asked Delia, confused, “how did you know what I would look like?”

The dragon turned away and seemed to be gazing into the distance for a moment. Finally, he turned back to answer her question. “I dreamed of you. From the day I first went blind, the dream has haunted me. In it, a young girl with green eyes and curly hair brings me...my heart’s desire. A cure.”

Delia thought about that for a time, and then spoke quietly. “I do have a jar with some glowing lichen in it. It’s just outside the cave entrance. We gathered it near the lost city of Atlantis. I wonder if it could be the answer to your prayers? If it could bring your sight back?”

“But, child, if I leave here, like anyone else, I can never come back. The enchantments I made would prevent me from returning, and I don’t have enough magic left to create another sanctuary as secure as this one. I’d be...vulnerable...out in the world. At a real disadvantage, especially if this lichen doesn’t work.”

“That’s true,” said Delia. “We have no guarantee that it will work.”

The three of them settled into an uneasy silence.

After a time, Jared spoke up. “Sir, I’ve listened to your story, and I have to say, I think you might be wrong about your greatest weakness and your greatest strength.”

The dragon snorted derisively, as if amused that this young creature might think, even for a moment, to know something HE didn’t know. “Oh, really, child?”

“Yes,” said Jared, “really. I think your greatest strength is your insight, your mind, your ability to dream and think and hope. And I think your greatest weakness is that you have fear in your heart, just the same as the rest of us. Zelyonov, I think you have to face your fear and come out of this cave. I know you might be disappointed. I know you might be hurt. But if we leave without you, your hope will go with us, and surely, you’ll begin to die without hope.”

They stood together in silence for a time, and then Jared heard a tinkling sound. Surprised, he looked more closely at Zelyonov. The great dragon...was crying. Great tears dripped from his eyes, turning into emeralds as they fell.

Delia felt her eyes filling with tears, too. “Is that why these hills are so rich with emeralds, Zelyonov? Because you’ve cried, here, alone in the dark?”

“Yes,” he sobbed. “I am so lonely. It is not enough, to think and dream, to teach once every twenty years for a short time. I want to see, and be seen. I want to be loved again.”

Delia couldn’t help herself. She ran toward the great dragon, who had laid his own body over lava so that they could safely cross. She leaned against his smooth neck, and said, “Dear, dear

dragon. I do love you. I do. If you come out with us, and if the lichen doesn't work, I'll be your eyes. I'll stay with you and help you find your way."

"I...I can't..." he said.

"You must," said Jared, sure now. "I know it's scary. Sometimes I want to hide away, too. In the end, though, we're not meant to be alone. We're not meant to live without hope. Just as you've said, life is about growth, and change...about facing your fears, about choosing to love even when it leads you into the unknown. Come on, now. We'll climb on, and you can just fly us on out of here. We'll go together. It'll be okay."

The dragon finally nodded, and said something to Sanah, who, surprised, nodded, and scampered quickly onto the dragon's back, where Delia and Jared already sat. "Hold on tight," said Zelyonov, and he launched himself up, through the hole, over the lava lake, and out the obsidian doors, which burst wide open as he approached. He circled once, and then landed on the uneven slope below the cave, staggering a bit.

"Delia? Jared? Are you all right?"

"Yes," said Delia. "We're fine."

She slid down and made her way to the spot where their packs lay, undisturbed. Rummaging through, she retrieved the jar that contained the lichen they'd collected on their trip to Atlantis. She ran over to the dragon, and, opening the jar, dipped in her fingers. Soon, they were coated in the glowing, greenish goop. She gently wiped them over Zelyonov's unseeing, black eyes, and watched as the greenish glow caught, and spread.

Zelyonov let out a huge bellow of joy, and launched himself into the air. "I can see, again! Oh, world, I have missed you! I have missed you!" He flew off into the distance, leaving Delia, Sanah, and Jared stranded on the mountainside. Delia's eyes went unfocused for a moment. "He says to tell Sanah he'll be back in a few days to begin her instruction. And...he says to tell you...thank you."

She shook her head as if to clear it, and in silence, they gathered up their things. Lou waited for them just around the corner, and they all climbed down the mountain together.

Dragon Task: Ask someone you love to help you do something you've been scared of doing.