

The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons
by the Rev. Liz Stevens

Installment five: Orange: Offer fair and kind treatment to all people
We affirm and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations

Our Story Thus Far...

A twelve year old kitchen boy named Jared is recognized as the “Chosen One” spoken of in an ancient prophecy when he touches the magical Pearl of Wisdom while spring cleaning...and the pearl begins to sing. The prophecy sets before him eight tasks, and claims that once he has completed these tasks, a new era of peace, harmony and prosperity will come to the land. Jared and his friend Delia, his chosen companion on the quest, have successfully completed the first task by earning the friendship of Krasnova, the Great Red Dragon. As our story begins today, they are rejoining their guide, a furry, slightly smelly, and funny looking little creature with big ears and a pot belly named “Lou.”

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Jared was feeling rather full of himself by the time they rejoined Lou at the edge of the forest. He’d enjoyed a pleasant evening with the reptilian Guardians of the Forest, eating tasty food and watching as the old translator told the story of their encounter with Krasnova. After the story was told, many of the creatures had looked at Jared with awe and respect, creeping close, bowing down, even reaching out to touch the hem of his tunic. It felt rather good to be adored that way.

As the three travelers started on their way, Jared wasted no time at all in telling Lou how brave he’d been, how he hadn’t doubted for a second that everything would be all right. After the third or fourth telling of the story, Lou stopped abruptly and turned to Delia. “You’re being awfully quiet, Delia. Is everything okay?”

“Oh, I guess so,” she said listlessly.

Jared launched into yet another recounting of the events in Krasnova’s cave, but Lou interrupted him. “Were you at the cave, too, Delia, or did you stay in the village?”

“I was there. It was amazing. She was really quite lovely. I think I’d like to paint her sometime. I don’t know if I’ll be able to mix exactly the right color for her eyes...”

Jared interrupted. “That’s nice, Delia. So, anyway, after I impressed her with my eloquence and my beautiful spirit...”

“Jared,” said Lou.

“Yes?” answered Jared.

“Please be quiet, just for a minute. I’d like to hear Delia’s version of things. Sometimes a different set of eyes sees details that become important later.”

“Oh,” scoffed Jared. “Delia was so scared she kept her eyes closed most of the time anyway.”

“I did not!” interjected Delia.

“Besides,” said Jared, “I’m the Chosen One. It’s what I do that matters.”

Delia stopped abruptly and her mouth opened and shut several times, as if she wanted to say something, but didn’t know quite how to spit it out. Jared, meanwhile, blithely went back to his story. He’d walked quite a ways before he noticed that he was alone. He turned around, indignant, and saw Lou and Delia chatting beside a tree several yards back. Fuming, he approached them.

“What are you doing? We need to get on with the quest! There’s no time for useless chatter!”

“Apparently,” said Lou coolly, “there’s no need for useless friends, either. Delia and I thought we’d let the Chosen One get on with it, since only what he does matters.”

“But...but...it says that without you, my quest will fail! You have to come with me! You’re the guide!” (he pointed at Lou.) “And you’re the companion!” (he pointed at Delia. “It’s in the book...I won’t succeed without you along.”

“You make it sound as if you would have succeeded just fine without me on the first task,” said Delia. “You seem to have completely forgotten how scared you were. I know you were thinking seriously of giving up back in the hut with the Forest Guardians. Safe passage probably sounded pretty good when you thought you’d have to slay a dragon.”

“I was not so scared! I never would have turned back. I know how important it is that I complete each task! It’s my job to save the whole world! You...you just have to tag along. You don’t even have anything important to do, like Lou does, showing the way.”

Delia felt shocked and hurt. “Well, then, if you don’t think you need me, maybe you’d like to find someone else to be your companion. Maybe that Sorceress you like so much...Marita, I think her name was? Lou, why don’t you take us back to the castle. I’ll get back to my life and His Wonderfulness can choose someone else to “tag along.”

Lou sighed, and shook his head sadly. They walked for a time in silence. They came to a small town, and Lou found some friends (as usual) who were happy to give them their midday meal. After the meal, one of their hosts’ daughters, who also loved to draw, invited Delia out to the woods nearby to see a particularly lovely waterfall. “Can I go?” asked Delia. “Of course,” said Lou. “But don’t take too long, okay?”

Jared chimed in. "Are you sure it's a good idea, Lou? After all, we have important business to be about."

Delia simply whirled on her heel and headed off. Her new friend, looking puzzled, followed her out the door. Lou gave Jared a level look and said, "We need to talk. Hans, Marta, we are so grateful for your hospitality, and normally, we'd help with the dishes, but there's a little situation I have to deal with. Do you mind if I take the boy for a bit of a chat?"

"Of course not," smiled Marta, who had lots of experience with surly boys. And so Lou and a slightly chastened Jared headed out to the hayfield, where they found a shady spot to sit and talk.

"Jared, my boy, there's a little...exercise...I'd like you to try. It's called 'Walk a Mile in Someone Else's Shoes.' You've had an eventful few months, I know, but I'd like you to try to go back and think about all these weeks since you first touched the Pearl as if you were not YOU, but Delia. What happened first?"

Jared chewed on a piece of straw for a while, then decided, even though it was a big waste of time, because how could HE know what Delia had done these past few weeks, he'd better at least try. Lou clearly wasn't going anywhere until he did.

"Well, she would have heard the pearl sing, like everybody else."

"But did she know it was you?"

"Probably not. She probably went looking for me to talk about it right away."

"And did she find you?"

"No. I was pretty busy, with Lord Sigismund and all those important people and Marita and everybody. I suppose she must have eventually figured out where I was, though. The whole castle was talking about it."

"Do you know if she tried to speak to you during those first few weeks?"

"No."

"Would you have wanted to speak to her, if your positions had been reversed?"

"Well, yes, I probably would have."

"And when, after four long weeks, you finally turned up on her doorstep, how did she respond?"

“She was happy to see me. I told her all about what I’d been doing, and she told me the news from the kitchen and something about kittens or something.”

“When you realized that she was the one you should take with you, did she say yes right away?”

“Of course she did!”

“Do you think she might have felt a little scared, or uncertain? Or even angry that you’d ignored her for a month, busy with more important people?”

Jared opened his mouth, then closed it abruptly.

“And then when you were captured, do you think that was any easier for her than it was for you? Or meeting the dragon? Or any of it? But she never backed down, never backed away. She stood by you, and you, Jared, are acting like an arrogant pain in the neck to one of the best friends I have ever had the chance to meet. And I’ve met a lot of very, very good friends.”

“Now, you’ve almost got her ready to abandon the quest and head back to the castle. Is that really what you want?”

Jared replied in a much quieter and more subdued voice. “No.”

“So do you maybe owe her an apology?”

Jared got even quieter. “I suppose so.”

“Jared, I can’t fix this for you. You have to fix it yourself, have to patch things up with Delia, because I’ll tell you, this whole quest is on the line. If she goes home hurt and angry, well...I can’t say any more, darn it, but you don’t want that to happen. So you get thinking on how best to make it up to her. Maybe start with ‘I’m sorry,’ and end with ‘thank you,’ with lots of your eloquent talkin’ in between. Humph. I’m going to go visit with Marta and Hans, now.” In a kinder voice, he continued, “I know you’ll do the right thing.”

Jared sat for a long time, searching for just the right words. When he saw Delia and her new friend returning to the house, talking a mile a minute, he picked up a rock and threw it...not at the girls, but hard, in the other direction. He was mad at himself and mad at Lou and mad at Delia, too, even though he knew she hadn’t done anything wrong. His feet dragged as he headed toward the house.

When he arrived, he stuck his head in the door and said, “Delia, could I have a word with you, in private, please?”

Delia hesitated for just a second before saying, a little haughtily, “I suppose so.”

Together, they went out a little ways and stopped next to the barn.

“I’m sorry I was such a jerk. I really need you. Please don’t go home and leave me alone.” All in one breath.

“Excuse me?” said Delia.

Jared exhaled, frustrated. “Look, Delia. I know I’ve been pretty full of myself lately and I haven’t been a very good friend. I ignored you for weeks, then I dragged you into a pretty uncomfortable and dangerous situation where we almost got killed. You, though, you stayed brave, and you helped me do what was right, and, and, I just feel better when you’re around. I have more scary things to face, and I may not be able to do what I need to, but when you’re around, it...helps. So, please, don’t go. I couldn’t have gotten this far without you...and I don’t think I’ll be able to get much further if I don’t have you with me to keep me brave.”

Delia stood silent for a little while, taking all this in. Finally she said, “Apology accepted. But Jared, though you may be the chosen one, I’m just as chosen as you. Lou says if you had asked anybody else to go with you, he wouldn’t have been able to come and guide us on our way. We have to do this together...as equals. Deal?”

“Deal,” said Jared, relieved. “So, what did you think about Krasnova?”

The two friends returned to the house, chatting companionably, and when Lou saw their smiles, he let out a huge sigh of relief. “Hans, Marta, kids, we need to hit the road, now, but I can’t tell you how important this stop has been.”

After they said their goodbyes, Delia, Lou, and Jared left together, heading off to their next adventure.

Dragon Task: ‘Walk a Mile’ in some one else’s shoes, and then tell them why they’re important to you.