Dragon Stones

M T Meiklejohn

Cassie meandered through the bustling markets, her steps guided by curiosity rather than a specific destination. She was drawn to the myriad of items from all corners of the land, each whispering a unique story. The coins in her pocket seemed to burn with anticipation, eager to be exchanged for something unique she could take home and add to her collection. At each market, she sought to purchase something that would be a reminder of how amazing the world was.

She adored her home and family and couldn't fathom being anywhere else. However, the idea of visiting far-flung and exotic destinations captivated her. During her free time from her apprenticeship in glass-blowing, she diligently crafted enough items to sell at the six monthly markets. She had already sold all her merchandise crafted for these markets and was now carrying a pouch heavy with coins.

A large, vibrant tapestry, a masterpiece of art, seized Cassie's attention. It portrayed a distant mountain enveloped by desert sand, with stone structures nestled amidst palm trees and a glistening lake in the foreground. The hues were what captivated her: pristine white sand, lush green trees, and crystalline blue water, all framed by a towering cliff of fiery red rocks. The intricacy of the details and the intensity of the colours were breathtaking, making the scene almost tangible. Cassie was utterly spellbound by the artist's mastery and the sheer beauty of the piece.

As Cassie approached the merchant, she couldn't help but notice the unusual sight behind his stall: a cart and a group of camels. These creatures, rarely seen in these parts, hinted at his distant origins and added an enigmatic aura to the scene. His complexion, a deep golden brown, bore the marks of a life spent under the scorching desert sun—a nomad from the vast eastern desert. His gaze, intense and penetrating, seemed to hold a thousand untold stories, leaving Cassie intrigued and eager to learn more.

‘Hello, is this a real place?’ Cassie asked the merchant.

The man gazed at Cassie with an intense stare. She raised her chin and met his look with a proud but tentative smile. She wondered what he would think of her. She was a young girl in her mid-teens, dressed in tidy but inexpensive trade clothing. As his stare continued, she wondered if he was trying to determine whether she was a genuine customer or wasting his time. From how he looked at her, she could tell that he couldn't see the ebb and flow of the energy lines surrounding everything. This unique ability, which she tapped into every day to guide her choices, set her apart. Without that information, he had to judge her based on how she physically stood before him.

Cassie suddenly became very aware of what she was wearing and how it would look to a stranger who couldn’t see the wealth in her pocket. Was he going to turn her away, she wondered.

‘Yes, it’s a real place. It is far across the desert and has taken me two moons to travel here to trade. It is the main trading stop in my homeland,’ he replied in a deep baritone voice with a thick accent that indicated her tongue was not his first language.

‘It’s beautiful,’ she said, admiring the work. ‘There are so many colours, yet they all blend and match wonderfully. Whoever created it is very talented.’

‘You have a good eye for one so young. The craftsperson is very talented and the pride of my family. She is my oldest niece, the daughter of my first sister,’ he replied with pride in his tone.

‘I have never seen the skill used to craft this before,' she said, admiring the work more closely. ‘I don’t have room for something this big. Do you have any other smaller pieces of her work?' she asked, looking

around at the other items in his stall but not seeing any by the same creator. All the other works were expertly crafted but not to the same level as the one on display.

The merchant stared at her with unwavering eyes for what seemed like an eternity before asking, 'Do you believe in Dragons?'

As Cassie looked into the depth of his dark, penetrating eyes, she realised how important her response was. The silence between them was heavy; if a pin dropped, the sound would reverberate through the markets. She carefully nodded before saying, 'I believe in Dragons.'

'My niece said one would come to these markets and ask that question. This person would see her true Song and shape the future moving forward. My niece is not only a gifted artist, she also has the sight. She said I was to give the person who asked the question this,' he said, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a miniature tapestry of a volcanic mountain covered in ice with fire and smoke coming out of the top. Cassie took the tapestry into her hands and studied the intricate patterning. How could someone get so much detail on such a small item? she wondered. Turning it over, she realised it was a money pouch with a tie and would strap to her belt.

'This is truly amazing. How much is it?' she asked, examining the workmanship of the item and hoping that all the money she had earned could pay for something of such high quality.

'It is not for sale. It is a gift. According to my instructions, you have asked the question and passed the test, so this is yours. I was also told to say, 'She looks forward to the joining of your Songs,' he replied, looking at her with curiosity.

Cassie was overwhelmed by his generosity, trying to decide how to respond; Cassie fidgeted with the pouch, drawing its strings in tight to

test how securely it would hold her money. Amazingly, she realised that unless it was flat, you couldn't tell what the image was; it looked like an expertly crafted ordinary woven drawstring pouch. Cassie could see the energy lines flowing from her to the pouch, signifying a strong bond. It would be useless to argue with the man; the energy had shown her she was meant to have this item.

Looking up at the man, she said, 'Thank you. What is your niece called?'

'I cannot give you that. She has not completed her vision quest to receive her name. Soon, she will embark on a journey to discover her true name and life purpose. When she returns, we will celebrate. Until that day, she is Rudar, meaning first daughter in our language,' he replied.

'May I give you something to take to her as a thank you?' Cassie asked spontaneously, feeling in her pockets for something to give in return for the generosity. Her hand touched a large, perfect Amethyst point in her working pouch. The point had called to her the day before travelling to the market. Somehow, she knew it was essential to bring it, but she had thought that was because she needed to craft something. Now, she realised it would be given in exchange for the tapestry.

'You honour me with your knowledge of our customs. I will take this back and give it to Rudar. It will confirm for her that I have done the task she asked of me,' he said with a bow. At that moment, he was drawn to someone admiring Rudar's tapestry. Cassie could see the strong energy lines and realised this person would take it home. The merchant would get a good price if the quality of the person's clothes was any indication of how heavy their money pouch would be.

As he turned to talk to the finely dressed gentlemen. Cassie slowly slipped away with her new money pouch in her pocket.

Lost in thought, she wandered further along the lane of stalls, oblivious to the direction she was taking or what she was passing. Lately, more and more of these strange encounters were happening; they seemed random, yet somehow she knew they had a deeper meaning and purpose. Synchronicity seemed to flow in the energy around her, guiding her steps to some unknown destination. Intriguingly, Dragon signs kept appearing around every corner with increasing frequency. Her mentor and guide, Grandpa Dragon, who visited her in her dreams, was increasingly insistent that she remind the world of Dragons. She still hadn't found the courage to voice her knowledge until today, when she answered the merchant's question.

She had always wondered if Grandpa Dragon was real. Something deep inside her said he was, which was why she had answered the question the way she had. How that was possible, she didn't know. It was said that Dragons had walked the land an age ago and then mysteriously disappeared, but not everyone believed, and some people even went so far as to say they had never existed.

'You there, girl, come here.'

The holler brought Cassie out of her pondering, and she looked around to see what the disturbance was. The shout had come from the Wise Women's tent, and she was standing outside the door looking directly at Cassie with a pointed finger and direct stare. Cassie looked around to see if someone was standing behind her, hoping someone would be there. Not seeing anyone, she realised the statement had been directed at her. Cassie started at her with an open mouth; she didn't understand why the Wise Woman was calling her. She had never had

any reason to go and see her, but she had heard all of the rumours surrounding dealing with one.

Most of the talk was from her best friend, Jewel. For years, as they sat around the campfire at night, he would try to scare her with spooky stories about what happens when people deal with a Wise Woman and how they change your destiny. Jewel and his family were Fisherfolk from a small remote village on the southern coast of the land. Everyone knew that Fisherfolk were a superstitious lot, and the remoter the location, the harder they held to their beliefs. Despite what she had heard from Jewel, Cassie never felt any fear or apprehension whenever she saw Shakra. She had taken all of Jewel's talk with a grain of salt. But now, Cassie was surprised that Shakra had singled her out, and a flurry of butterflies danced in her stomach.

Looking over at her, Cassie brought her hand up to her chest and said, 'Me?'

'Yes, you, come here, girl. We need to talk,' she replied before returning to her tent without a backward glance.

Cassie looked around the lane; all the other market stallholders and shoppers were staring at her as the source of the disturbance. Looking down, she turned and quickly entered the tent, desperate to escape the prying eyes.

Cassie stopped in surprise and amazement. The inside of the tent was like nothing she had ever seen before. It was a mixture of vibrant colours, with multiple shawls and scarves hanging from the ceiling and sides, somehow creating a swirling pattern that seemed to flicker in the light. A transparent dome at the top of the tent allowed light to stream in and intermingle with the warm glow emanating from the candles. In the centre of the room, directly under the light, was a small

round table with chairs on either side. The Wise Woman sat on one and silently indicated Cassie to sit on the other.

'Cassandra, I have watched you grow and develop in strength for years, and the time has finally come for us to meet. You see what I see. You see the patterns of the Song that flows and swirls around us,' Shakra said.

Cassie held her tongue, not knowing what to say. People looked at her strangely whenever she talked about the Song or the energy she could see. Not even her aunt and uncle, who raised her, understood her meaning.

'You know what I talk of. I have consulted the Dragon Stones, and they have told me that I must teach you the symbols, and over the next six months, you must create me a set,' she said, reaching under the table and bringing out a drawstring bag that jingled with the sound of many stones hitting each other as it moved. Slowly, she emptied the pieces onto the table and spread them out with her hand so that each symbol faced up.

'It is believed that when humans and Dragons first became friends, they presented us with Dragon Symbols to seal the friendship. There are twenty-four Dragon Stones, and each symbol has a different meaning. We can glimpse the divine Song that guides us all by casting these out. There is also a blank twenty-fifth stone; this is for when the answer is not written yet. Will you accept my commission and create a set for me? Before you answer, consider your response carefully; when someone comes to a fork in the road, a change of direction or deviation can alter the course of their life. That makes it something to not take lightly,' she said, sitting back and patiently waiting for Cassie to decide.

Cassie looked down at the stones before her and could feel the power they were emanating. Somehow, thin rays of energy in all shades of colours radiated from the stones and travelled up and out into the universe. Closing her eyes, she perceived a joyous melody that somehow the universe was singing at the opportunity before her, and she realised that all of her wandering today had led her to this point. Now, she needed to choose. As she looked at the vibrant energy and the harmonious colours emanating from each one, she yearned to learn more.

'I will make you a set, but I don't know the symbols to use,' Cassie replied.

'That I can show you and give you a set to study. First, you must look closely at the Runes before you. Please close your eyes and, with your inner eye, perceive the energy that comes from them. Each one will sing a different Song, which will show in the colour and intensity of the vibration it gives off. Everything is made of energy, and everything gives off a different vibration,' she said, pausing to give Cassie time to follow her instructions.

Opening herself up to the energy, Cassie took a deeper look at the patterns flowing out and the subtle colour differences between each one. Opening her eyes, she looked at Shakra and asked, 'Will you teach me the symbols?'

'I have studied for a lifetime to understand their meaning; you will need to do the same over your Song. The set I will give you was my first one and is yours to keep. You do not need to know their meaning to create a set for me. All you need to do is concentrate on one at a time. Hold it in your hands, close your eyes, and see what it is meant to be. You will then be guided to what you need to make it. Do you

understand what I mean?' she asked, looking from the stones to Cassie.

'Yes,' Cassie said, slowly nodding.

'Dragon Stones are kept in a bag; when you're ready, put your hand into the bag and draw out a stone. Carry that stone with you, study it, and take the time to immerse yourself in its energy. You will be drawn to create the Rune when you have the necessary answers. Be patient. Some will come quickly, and others will take time; there is no rhythm or rhyme to how one interprets energy. Once you have the understanding, you will create what is needed.'

'Why have you chosen me for this? You have never seen my work,' Cassie asked in confusion.

'I have watched you for years and seen you grow in strength; you shine so brightly and yet yearn for some direction or guidance. I consulted the Dragon Stones before I came, and my task was clear: I was to help you understand and look at things from a different perspective. You have six months until our next meeting to complete this task, and I will pay you handsomely, but your real reward will be in the knowledge you gain,' she said, handing Cassie a bag of Dragon Stone.

'Thank you,' Cassie said, taking the precious item into her hands; the energy felt right.

'Now go; we will not see each other until the next market when you bring me back the Dragon Stones,' Shakra said, gathering up the Runes on the table.

Cassie slowly rose and walked out of the tent with her new stones cupped preciously in her hands. Today had been full of wonders, and somehow, everything around her seemed so much brighter.

Michelle T Meiklejohn owns Energy In Balance, an online business selling crystals and crystal jewellery. She resides on the beautiful Sunshine Coast in Qld, Australia. She is an avid hiker and outdoors enthusiast, spending most weekends hitting the trails and exploring nature. Having spent the last fifteen years writing and expanding her knowledge through her website, she has now taken the step to develop her writing and create her first fantasy series, 'Return of the Dragon'. Michelle's work is a transformative journey, intertwining her profound knowledge and creating a soul-searching experience.

Michelle's passion for travel and exploration is evident in her work. Having lived in the UK for four years, she developed a desire to see the world and experience different cultures. Her travels have taken her to over 40 unique countries, where she stopped, listened, and learned from the diverse cultures she encountered. Through her travels and work, she explored different areas of energy work dealing with crystals, sound therapy, energy healers, shamans and psychics. This rich tapestry of experiences and knowledge is woven into her first novel, 'The Dragon Prophecies', the first book in 'Return of the Dragons'.



Copyright © 2024 M T Meiklejohn

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by M T Meiklejohn, Qld Australia
https://mtmeiklejohn.com/

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.