

Parable of the Ring

From Brokenness to Destiny
- The story of a living stone

by Christine Beadsworth

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Dedication

To all God's precious stones - no matter what part of His process you are in -

To those deep underground; hurting, hidden in darkness and yet to be found - may His destiny come forth in you

To those who are in the painful process of cutting and polishing - His grace is sufficient for you, for His power is made perfect in weakness

To those trying to find their place and purpose in the Body - allow Him to choose your setting, then your true beauty will be seen

And to those on the brink of a new adventure with the Bridegroom - trust Him, He has never been known to fail!

Once upon a time there was a girl, an ordinary girl by most peoples' standards - not someone who would stand out in a crowd or cause a second look. Not that she minded this really. It made her way easier, blending in that is... It meant the diary of her days was safe from prying eyes. She didn't want anyone flipping the pages, poring over her soul.

The journey of life had not led her into the sunny meadows she'd expected. Instead there'd been desert sands and more than one sheer precipice she had had to negotiate with fingernails bleeding ragged from the iron grip of her fright.



At least now the road plodded monotonously level and unbending. There could be no surprises. For once, predictable was soothing. She shut her eyes and turned her head to block the voice that filtered through on the unfurled edges of the wind, calling her to reach for heights yet unexplored, to fill her lungs brimful of virgin air and let the plump, sweet juice of life run richly down her chin. No. Shallow breathing worked for her. Stale air and closed windows felt cozy and safe. That wooing voice on the wind could rattle someone-else's cage!

Not that she'd always felt this way. There had been a time - light-years ago - when her steps were firm with trust and pain was just a word on Oxford's

concise pages. She'd tossed her head and laughed at impossibilities then and relished the feel of hope's silken touch soft against her cheek.

That was before the days of tearing; before the winding way was strewn with hard-abandoned dreams; before the fabric of her heart gave way, worn through from aching.

Once, dignity hung shapely from her youthful shoulders and her eye was clear, unmarred by grief's encroaching cloud. But now she stood, unmoving. In this place she got what she expected. Nothing. And she could live with that. The grave of her desires was a peaceful port - or so she thought.



And then, into this vacant clutter burst a song - someone had left her something. Not just anything, a very special something - a diamond ring, no less - and it was real. For her alone. Her heart skipped but did not dare to sing.

And so it came, delivered by an uncle who complained that no-one had ever left him a ring. As if they would....And it was huge, indecently so, she thought with a surge of wicked delight. Pity about the dull place that refused to reflect the light. But she would set it so that it would not catch one's eye, that faded place. She was good at disguising scars; she'd done it all her life. At least now she felt important. Someone had thought enough of her to leave her this;

even if it was flawed it was still real.
That counted.

"This is not a flaw, this is a break." So said the jeweler, as he squinted at the stone through lens after lens. "This stone has received a giant blow!" Even as he said it, the girl wondered if he was talking about her or the stone. The words seemed to prod some tender place within her soul. "Pity...it can't be set in this state. Any heat applied, any pressure at all will cause the crack to spread and the stone will cleave in two."

It was then that she knew it was true - by staring at the stone, the jeweler could see into her soul. She felt naked, exposed, undone. Glancing at the window as if to find a way to escape the searing

spotlight, she reeled and went lame at the man's next words. "Sadly, as it stands, this diamond is of no value. No-one would want it." She winced from the blow that confirmed all her fears - with all she'd lived and done, she was too battle-scarred, too bent and bound to fetch a price. Even a slave-trader would think twice...

She hung her head and the jeweler, sensing her keen disappointment, softened his tone and tried to add a ring of hope to his next suggestion: "we could send it away. The cutters may be able to salvage something out of it, perhaps a small stone but it's better than nothing." Better than nothing. The phrase echoed in her head all the way home. Yes, perhaps there was just the faintest

glimmer of hope but she couldn't be sure, the light in the tunnel was too dim.

Days and weeks went by and she heard nothing. Eventually she could bear it no longer; even bad news was better than no news at all. Trembling, she dialed the jeweler's number, only to be informed that the cutter had declared there was nothing he could do - "not worth the effort" he had said, underscoring the judgment over her head...

"However, "the jeweler continued, "I didn't want to take no for an answer so I sent it to a second cutter. Perhaps he can help us."

And so hope flickered valiantly in the dark recesses of her inner chambers.

There seemed to be the faintest breeze of life filtering through her shuttered soul. She didn't know how it had found its way in but it smelt good.

Finally the long-awaited news reached her. Yes, the diamond could be re-cut. There was just one hitch - the only shape it could be cut into was a heart! Immediately one of her shutters burst open and a blast of fresh sweet air assailed her senses. A *heart*... her broken stone could be re-cut; perhaps her broken heart could be restored - to something clear and bright by Love's kind hand!

"Is the shape a problem? Do you mind?" the jeweler's voice cut in upon her reverie. "Mind? Oh no, it's perfect - I

always wanted to wear my heart on my sleeve..."

As the girl waited for her stone to be re-cut, the heart began to speak to her soul.

It whispered of a love so great that flaws and failings faded into inconsequence within the pure strength of its light. It woo-ed and drew her deepest soul to somewhere, Someone far beyond the tattered edges of experiences page.

It was as if her tiny piece of clay responded to the summons to return to Alpha-earth from which it came; to lose itself and yet be truly found within the

ancient pool from which it'd sprung; to know as it was fully known.

She heard the call, the primal cry of Love laid down for the Beloved. It sounded clear across the span of all the ages' hills and resonated like a dove come home to roost within the belfry of her heart.



And then she knew - with clarity of newborn sight that all the journey of her life, the questions and the sleepless nights had brought her like a faithful friend to this, her searches end, the dwelling-place of Grace; where she was free to rest and feed amongst the lilies 'til her need was filled to overflow, and Love's sweet apple-breath restored her soul and laughter's bells began to chime the echo of that ancient rhyme, ' yes, I am His and He is mine'. It's real this time.

And so, from then, it seemed that every bend and turn contained bouquets and kisses dropped from her Beloved's lips, sweet testimony to the mutual joy of her heart's spring. And then she found that she could sing - or rather songs

just seemed to emanate uncalled from the ceaseless bubbling source of joy down deep within. They winged like hatchlings on their maiden flight, tossed high towards the heaven's light; a myriad of heart-poems sent only for her Love's delight.

Minutes merged and seconds flew until the day her stone was due. "I'm quite amazed," the man enthused, "it's so much larger, clear and true than I expected! Beautiful!"

She smiled, regal, tuned to her Beloved's still small voice within - "You are My jewel and all has been made new". The feeling of contentment grew and spread until it could not be contained -

resounded in one shout of praise,
"thank-you!"

"My pleasure," the jeweler grinned,
quite puzzled at the transformation
right beneath his gaze.

Perhaps diamonds were a girl's best
friends after all....

She took her diamond home, like a
newborn baby reverently wrapped in
tissue paper and hid it safely in the
recesses of a drawer.

It seemed that all the world had been repainted; colour danced and glowed on everything from airbrushed expanses of sky to the humblest daisy pushing its way through the pavement cracks.

And every chance she got, she stole a peek at the transformed stone and felt again the deep warmth of belonging. It was as if she too was cradled in a giant hand and bathed in Love's intense gaze.



It felt strange not to have to do anything to earn this overflowing favor. All her life had been spent striving; scaling the ladders of others' increasing demands, only to crash down rung by disillusioned rung and land exhausted in the pit of disapproval and rejection.

Now she was on a clean page, filled with endless unspoken possibilities as she held her breath and waited for the Author of all Destinies to pen the parameters of her purpose before her seeking eyes.

Yet, it seemed silly to hide the brilliant beauty of her gem for her exclusive gaze. Such transformation needed to be proclaimed, revealed for all the world to see and know that every lump of coal can

grow into a work of beauty; that there was hope for all who cried for light to come; that second chances weren't for some, but all who thirst.

With stumbling steps she walked the path to the Designer's door and as they pored over the heart-gem, she tried to convey the journey of this stone, the greatness of its purpose, the importance of a setting worth a thousand words.

Together they sketched and toyed with idea after idea, looking to the designs of those renowned for skill, sought-out for craftsmanship. At last, dazzled by the myriad of pictures that had passed beneath her gaze, she chose one that seemed right for such a special stone, intricate enough to convey the depths

and heights of all that Love had wrought in her.

Returning home, she once again played the waiting game. This time she tried to be patient, knowing that the process of working the gold could not be hurried.

The heating and the beating, the crucible of molten fire and blows of the hammer all played a vital role. The making of the setting in which the gem would rest was as important a step as the eons of time the earth's womb took to make the gem. She trusted that the Creator of both knew what He was doing.

Her heart sang as she took delivery of the ring. Now it could be not only a blessing to her but to many. She slipped

it on and was amazed at its weight. She felt like a girl, newly engaged, weighed down by the symbolism of this gem upon her maiden-hand... She would get used to it.

But as the days wore by, it seemed to get heavier and as she studied the setting, the story it told was so formal and grand that the heart no longer seemed nestled in Love's golden hand but shackled by a yoke so great it wearied her to behold it.

And so, trembling, she returned to the Designer and told of her plight. It was her fault the setting wasn't right. She'd leaned on her own understanding, chosen according to her own taste; in her haste

not searching for the voice of Him Who would guide all her steps to success.

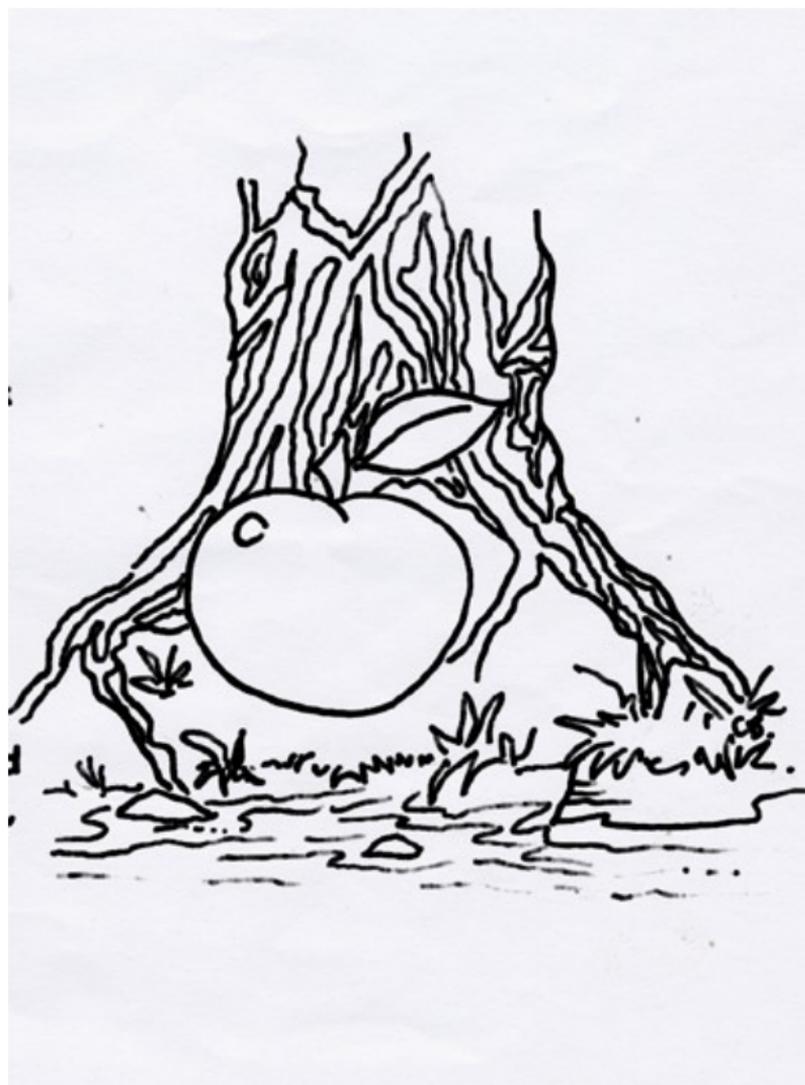
And so it was she came again to the place of stillness; waiting meekly for Wisdom to speak. And as He always does when the earnest cry of a penitent heart reaches His ears, He came and taking her hand, turned her about so her eyes were no longer on the ends of the earth but fastened on His face... " and this is where I would have you stay," He gently instructed, " fix your eyes on Me, the One Who began your story and the One Who will put the finishing touches to the last line. Do all I say - and not one thing besides."

So, day by day she gazed at the reflection of her gem in her Beloved's

eyes, waiting for His words of instruction to be sown upon the soil of her fresh-plowed heart. And when it came, it was so brief, so simple, she was unsure she had heard correctly.

"Apples of gold in settings of silver".
Just that - apples; fruit plucked from a pure tree whose roots grow deep. Not baskets full. Just one handpicked to satisfy a thirsty soul.

"Such will be the words you speak, My Love, My Dove - as grafted in to Love's deep root supply and biding there, in stillness 'til the sap of the eternal Word flows strong within your branches veins, like silver seven times refined, poured out from Loves consuming fire; so shall your lips fruit be desired.



Just as your gem was cut with well-timed skillful blows, so too shall be your place within My hand; precision-tool, a living sword to cleave, with one clean stroke of love, the chains that chafe My people so. My words within your mouth shall break the yokes and let them go!

And as the gentle words soaked in, she understood and finally knew her time of rest upon His breast was not a place of passing through, to seek again when work was done. No! All the purpose of her life was found within her Love's embrace - for only dwelling in this place was she equipped with power and grace to freely give what she'd received, fresh bread from her Beloved's lips.



Apart from Him, her light was dimmed and nothing flowed from deep within. Where could she go when all of life was found in Him? He was her Destiny, her Spring-of-Joy unearthed within the Vale of Tears. And she was His. Love's circle was complete.

And so the gem was set; uniquely plain it seemed...and yet, a picture paints a thousand words, she once had said.

A love-apple nestled in gold on silver stalk -eloquent simplicity, fruit of a word in season. And it was good - very good.

So life went on, until one day she woke to find her hand was bare. The precious ring had disappeared. Her thoughts, bewildered, reeled and spun like sailors on a drunken sea. How could He allow this travesty?

Her purpose plucked from in her grasp. Inheritance, once free received - now stolen...and, bereft, she grieved. For victories as yet un-won, for mountain heights that were to come and charted journeys all her own, for life's sweet joys now still unknown - all snatched while slumber lulled her senses.

At last her grief was spent and sobs subsided into sniffs and through this damp and dreary veil, the well-loved Voice spoke soothing to her bleeding

heart. "You do not need it, Precious One. The work's inside you, sealed and done. I've carved My image on your heart; from there the life-flow always starts and none can rob you of a thing, your journey's charted deep within. So as you've learnt to heed My voice, to yield yourself and make the choice to always joyfully obey the smallest nudge or call to stay, external props will fall away.

You will not live life by the book or follow rules imposed by men but, like the wind that gently blows and then it's gone, we know not where; so too My Spirit deep within, will move you to My own heart's call - a cry for Love to be made known - and you and I, in close embrace, will go from here to every place where hearts are bound and souls

cry out, where hope is lost and darkness reigns and lives are broken and in pain...and as we stoop and enter in, the breath of Life will blow again, just as upon your shuttered soul - Love burst in and made you whole!

So understand, My Precious One, the call for us to go has come. You must press on and take firm hold of that for which your soul was won. This is the moment, now's the time; there're many good works to be done.

Come - take My hand, My precious Bride. Our new adventure's just begun!

