

Surrounded

by Lynda Warner

Once upon a time there was a boy who grew up in the most **beautiful** place in the world. Big trees, big mountains, and sea that reflected the sky. There were eagles and salmon that were part of the cycle of life there. There were also coyotes, and cougars, and bears in the forests, birds, wild geese and plenty of rain in the skies. The boy's name was Ben and he was a son of the king of See-ahn-ish.

As the king's son, Ben grew up knowing he was special – that his life had an out-of-the-ordinary purpose. He knew there was an amazing future in store for him. Ben also knew his father loved him. Every day his dad said to him, "Son, you are blessed with **every blessing**. Your life is **full** of promise. **You** are set apart for special purposes. Everything you need is here for you. Peace surrounds you. I love you, Ben!"

So Ben was a happy boy. He was aware that somehow his father's words lifted him up into higher places and he was enveloped in his father's love.

Each morning Ben loved riding his bike to school on the trail near his house. The clouds often looked like necklaces around the mountains and the rain drizzled down in See-ahn-ish, but that never stopped Ben. He flew on his bike over the rocks and tree roots along the bike trail.

At the third bend Ben knew there was a huge rock; this was his favourite part of the trail. He knew that rock like a brother. He waited for this rock. It was as big as a house. He even pedaled faster as he approached it. And every day Ben pulled up hard on his handlebars and in one fluid motion cleared that rock like a bird. Sometimes it was like going over in slow motion and he saw the trees floating by him. Sometimes he glided over it in the blink of an eye, so fast he was back on the ground again in an instant. When Ben saw an eagle wheeling in the air overhead in See-ahn-ish he felt that he and his bike could even take wing like that eagle and fly over the rock.

Then one day Ben got up and looked out the window. It looked like the sky was crying. Dark clouds blocked the sun and the tears made everything wet and slippery. Ben got ready for school, made his lunch, and grabbed his backpack. As he went out the door his father spoke the same words to him that he said every day, "Son, you are blessed with every blessing. Your life

is full of promise. You are set apart for special purposes. Everything you need is here for you. Peace surrounds you. I love you, Ben."

Ben got on his bike and started to pedal. The rain was coming down hard, and he saw something dark on the trail ahead. "Roar!" said the bear, turning to face him. As it rose on its hind legs, fear filled Ben's heart and froze his fingers on the brakes. Somehow he stopped the bike and the bear passed across the trail off into the bushes at the side. Ben's heart pounded as he slowly set off again. His mind raced ahead. Would the bear be there again tomorrow? Was he really safe biking this trail every day?

Ben's mind was so full of bear that he forgot about the third bend. You can guess what happened next. Ben went flying, but it wasn't over the rock! He flew off his bicycle, landing at the bottom of a big tree beside the trail. His left arm really hurt. Gingerly picking up his bike with his right arm, Ben walked it the rest of the way to school. By the time he got there he was late and thoroughly wet through. His father's words drifted through his mind. "Son, you are blessed with every blessing. Your life is full of promise. You are set apart for special purposes. Everything you need is here for you. Peace surrounds you. I love you, Ben!"

"Really?" Ben thought, feeling as though all the joy and peace had tumbled out of him during his fall. Wet like a dog, his arm throbbing, and nearly dragging his bike, Ben struggled through the school door.

His Dad came with dry clothes and took him to See-ahn-ish General Hospital. Hours later still hurting and sporting a huge cast on his left arm, Ben left the hospital. It turned out his bike needed repairing too, the front wheel damaged by hitting the rock. But the greatest damage was to Ben on the inside. He had believed his life was special, immune, perhaps, to things that happened to other people. Ben was the king's son. How could this have happened to him?

He stayed home from school that day and the next because he had so much pain in his arm. After his kingly duties were finished, Ben's dad spent time with him and Ben leaned into him, needing and soaking up his father's affection. His Dad draped an arm over Ben's shoulder, pulling Ben into him.

By the time Ben was ready to go to school again the sky had stopped blubbering and the sun had come out. But there was no way Ben could ride to school; he had to walk. His father saw him to the door, helping Ben to get

his backpack on over his broken left arm. "Son, my words are still true. You are blessed with every blessing. Your life is full of promise. You are set apart for special purposes. Everything you need is here for you. Peace surrounds you. I love you, Ben."

Ben felt his father's words and presence go with him as he started walking. He let the words soak into him and they seemed to bring him life. He even felt a small melting of the sadness and fear inside him. Ben looked up and saw an eagle above him. He wouldn't be flying like that again anytime soon. But he knew he was still the king's son. He knew his father loved him. These things hadn't changed. Maybe, just maybe, Ben thought, the rest was still true as well?

Walking along the trail, the familiar forest route brought him comfort. When he came to the third bend he looked at the tree where he had fallen two days previously; he looked at his arm in the cast and the shock of the accident hit him again. But something deeper filled him too – knowing, remembering his father's strong love for him. Ben looked around to see if his father was behind him, his presence was almost tangible. No, not visible, but surely there with Ben, reassuring him. "Son, you are blessed with every blessing. Your life is full of promise. You are set apart for special purposes. Everything you need is here for you. Peace surrounds you. I love you, Ben."

There was power and truth in his father's words. Ben felt another piece of the sadness and fear inside him melt away. In that moment Ben understood that his broken arm would heal; the pain would pass. His father knew him and loved him better than anyone and **that** was what was most important.