



The indigo and gold leaf lay hidden under a somewhat large grey rock. As Luna bent over to pick the radiant object up, she couldn't help but giggle. Finding these glowing treasures was an everyday routine for Luna. She lived in a world where black and white were only mediated by grey, except for small objects scattered across her world. They were life gems, full of vibrant color and power. Most people didn't take the time to look for life gems; they were either too tired or distracted. But Luna sought out these treasures each day. Something magical happened when she collected them. She found that the color from the life gems slowly transferred to her own body. And another curious thing took place. Her heart, which slowly emptied as the day passed, was filled again with new life. So much so that she

began to glow with color. Today was no different, and as Luna turned the leaf round and round in her hand, the yellow and blue hues shone almost iridescent. Happily, she put it in her pocket as she headed for home, the life gem causing a soft glow about her as she walked.

Luna's home was like a dragon's lair full of stolen treasure. Shelves, boxes, entire book cases were all filled with every single life gem Luna had found. Some were rocks; some were leaves; some were shells and all sorts of natural objects. Each one of them held a memory precious to Luna, and though their brilliance faded over time, they still filled a tiny portion of Luna's heart with life and light when she looked at them. This was why it was so important to look for new life gems each day. Once a life gem was found, it filled the spirit completely; its power slowly faded, but never completely.

One day while Luna was out hunting for life gems, she met a boy. He actually startled her. She was busy digging away at some sand when a shadow appeared over her. Giving a little cry, she quickly turned around to see a dark-skinned, eager face peering down at her. "Hi," the boy said, "I'm Albert. Sorry if I scared you." "Oh no," Luna replied, "It's okay." "Say, what are you doing?" Albert asked. "Well," said Luna, "I am looking for life gems." "What are life gems?" Albert asked with an inquisitive look. "You'll see," replied Luna, "Help me look." Slowly Albert bent down on his hands and knees and began to pull the damp sand towards him, helping Luna dig out the hole she was working on. Minutes turned to hours, and soon the sun began to set. They had dug a hole big enough for them both to stand in. "Are you sure something's down here?" asked Albert. "No," replied Luna, "but part of the fun of having life gems is finding them." So they kept digging, and as night slowly fell, a small patch of light began glowing from beneath the sand. "I think we found one!" shouted Luna excitedly. As they cleared the sand away, Albert pulled out a purple and green seashell. "Oh!" exclaimed Albert, "it's beautiful!" Luna just grinned. "This is a life gem." Slowly, as Albert held the shell, light began to fill his body, and the greys and blacks became brilliant colors. And as his heart filled with the life of the life gem, he couldn't help but giggle. Astounded by the transformation, Albert asked Luna, "If these make me feel so good and look so beautiful, why don't other people look for life gems?" With a thoughtful look Luna replied, "Well, I don't know. Maybe because they are hidden, and people don't want to look for them."

Albert thought about this with a nod. "Well can I come and look for them with you?" he asked. "Sure!" replied Luna, "that would be fun!" As they walked back home, their vibrant colors lit the night around them. The closer they got to Luna's house, though, the more worried Albert looked. Luna thought for a moment before she went inside and took Albert's hands. "Here," she said, "take this." Albert smiled, his face lit up by the life gem. "Thank you," he said. "See you tomorrow?" "See you tomorrow," Luna replied as Albert walked off, a moving cloud of light.

For the next few weeks Luna and Albert went gem hunting rain or shine. Sometimes they ended up by the sea, sometimes chasing butterflies in the forest. They spent every day together laughing, running, and sometimes swimming, and each day they found another unique life gem bursting with color and light. So on a sunny, warm day, Luna waited for Albert to come to begin the hunt. She waited for one hour, then two, but he never came, so she thought to herself, "Maybe he's already gone out looking." She searched all their favorite places but could not find him. Puzzled, she continued to search alone till she found a life gem in the way of a pine cone. Happily, she put it in her pocket and started home.

The following days were lonely ones for Luna. Each day she waited for Albert, but he never came. She loved looking for life gems, but it just wasn't the same without him. One rainy day Luna decided she was going to find Albert. She was worried and wondered why he hadn't come. The only problem was she didn't know where he lived. He had always come to her house and dropped her off before walking home. Slowly, a deep sadness and then determination settled in Luna. She began going house to house, knocking on doors, looking in windows. House after house she looked but still no Albert. As she turned to head home, she saw one lonely house at the end of the street. "One more," she thought, "I'll check one more." As she peeked her head in the window, everything was dark. It was difficult to see, yet she thought she heard a faint voice. Quietly tip toeing to the door, she pressed her ear to the frame. "Luna." "Luna." Was that her name? Timidly she began to open the door and looking inside, saw a frail body in a bed. "Albert?" Luna whispered. "Luna," Albert weakly replied, "I'm in here." Slowly Luna crept toward the bed, and as her eyes adjusted to the dark, they settled on a very lifeless looking Albert. There was absolutely no color about him, just a grey pallor. "Albert, are you okay?" Luna asked. "Why haven't you come with me to find life gems? I waited every day for you." Albert lowered his head, "I've been tired, Luna. I haven't been able to get out of bed." With a sigh Luna came close to the bed and stroked Albert's hair out of his face. "Well it's good to see you. I've missed you!" said Luna. "I've missed you too," said Albert. Suddenly Luna had a thought. She slowly pulled out an orange and blue feather from her pocket. She had found it earlier on her search for Albert. The glowing treasure filled the dim room with light as Albert's eyes grew large. "Ooooo. That's a pretty one!" exclaimed Albert. "Here," said Luna, "you keep it." And as Albert took the shining feather from Luna, his heart slowly filled and a little color started to creep into his body. As the transformation filled the room with light, Luna and Albert laughed and decided it was a very good day indeed.

For the next two months Luna visited Albert, always bringing along two life gems she had found earlier in the day. One for her and one for Albert. And each day the life gems brought Albert back to life a little more until one day when Luna arrived, Albert was standing outside waiting for her. "Shall we go hunt for gems?" Albert asked. Surprised and yet elated, Luna smiled saying, "Yes, Albert. I would love to look for gems!" So the two set out on another grand adventure laughing and enjoying each others company.

As the years went by, Luna and Albert grew up and learned they would have to look for life gems on their own. But Albert never forgot Luna's kindness and the power of hunting those gems every day. As he aged, he often gave his life gems to others from whom no light shone; he was determined to live a life full of color. Luna also never forgot Albert. It was through her friendship with him she discovered the joy of sharing the beautiful things in life with others. She would live to remember the grey of her world and how one simple act of kindness can change even the darkest day.