

## The Kingdom of Rayad

Sharon Larsen

“...and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.” 2 Nephi 28:21

Once upon a time there was a little kingdom called Rayad. The tiny people who inhabited this kingdom were called “Rayadites”. They lived happily sharing and caring about each other. Life was good to them. There were only a few things they needed to watch out for. Like, for instance, chocolate cake or wearing the color red. If any Rayadite would ever eat chocolate cake or wear red, his spirit would become weakened and he would care less and less about himself and the rules of the kingdom.

Also living in this tiny kingdom was Zynock. Zynock was evil and wanted to destroy the kingdom and all of the people in it. He hated them to be happy and loving because it made it harder for him to reach them and influence them. He knew what weakened their spirits and made them easier to capture. But Zynock knew that he could not just offer the Rayadites chocolate cake and have them devour it –they were not that foolish! Nor could he make the most wonderful garment to wear in a bright red and expect them to wear it immediately! The Rayadites wanted to be good and strong. They had made promises to each other that they would help and strengthen each other in times of need. So how could Zynock weaken this people? How could he get them to succumb to him so he could destroy them and thus the whole kingdom?

“Let’s see,” he thought, “I can’t get them to eat chocolate cake right off, but maybe I could get them to develop a taste for chocolate first of all.”

That’s when chocolate chip cookies were introduced to the kingdom of Rayad. At first the cookies were ignored, then scoffed at, and then some commercials came on their screens and billboards showing handsome, wonderful looking Rayadites eating chocolate chip cookies!! – and nothing happened to them, except it made them more popular and sophisticated, at least that’s what it showed on the screens and billboards. It wasn’t long before a few Rayadites could be seen eating a chocolate chip cookie every now and then, and they seemed to be doing fine! They were still loving and caring and hadn’t changed at all –so it seemed, so more and more Rayadites began eating the cookies. What they didn’t realize was that the portion of chocolate chips had been doubled in each cookie. They were getting a double dose of chocolate, disguised in the cookies. You’d hear phrases like:

“That cookie is really good, except for a couple of places where it tastes pretty chocolatey –but don’t miss the cookie just for those two places. It’s too good a cookie and you can overlook the taste.”

Or:

“I heard that our friend Rayadite has eaten one of those chocolate chip cookies and she says it’s not bad at all. It’s nothing to be afraid of. It won’t ruin your life if you eat it!”

That was true, lives didn’t seem to be ruined by chocolate chip cookies and things were pretty much the same as usual, except some of the teachers and leaders and parents in Rayad suggested avoiding the cookie because tastes for chocolate were being developed.

“Avoid the cookies?”, came exclamations.

“What for?”

“What’s wrong with them? They’re not chocolate cake!”

“How stuffy can you get?”

Some who refused to eat the cookies were even laughed at and made fun of.

Zynock started chuckling to himself. He had no idea his plan would work so well! And Zynock was patient. He didn’t care how long it took to destroy Rayad, just so it was destroyed.

Chocolate chip cookies seemed to be moving pretty well. The words of caution and counsel from the leaders weren’t much for Zynock to worry about because his commercials and billboards were so much more exciting and enticing. He had to make them that way, or the truth of the leaders would have swayed the Rayadites away from the cookies.

Now it came time to introduce a new product of destruction. No, not chocolate cake, not quite yet –spice cake, white cake, yellow cake, carrot cake, any kind of cake but chocolate—with chocolate frosting, rich chocolate frosting.

Zynock rubbed his hands together and chuckled! More commercials, more billboards, now a few songs to hum and sing in their minds all day about how wonderful chocolate cake would be, although they’re not eating it .....yet! You have to get them thinking about it before they will actually succumb.

Then in the Kingdom of Rayad, you could hear:

“Have you tried that yellow cake with chocolate frosting?”

“well, no, is it good?”

“Oh, yes! Granted, it is chocolatey, but it’s not chocolate cake. And it’s really not much more chocolate than those cookies we’ve been eating!”

“But the cake doesn’t seem right. I mean cookies are one thing, but cake?”

“Ah, come on! The point is the chocolate and this is not more than you’ve already been eating. Everybody’s eating it. You can’t pass it up and be the only one left out.”

In the meantime, the songs are subtly strumming away in the background singing about chocolate cake. Right, the words are not good, but the beat and the rhythm is so cool that many Rayadites listen just for the music. After all, what can music do?

Zynock is thinking again:

“One thing that strengthens those Rayadites is when they are together and talking to each other. They seem to help each other then and it makes them want to be good. What can I do about that?”

“Well”, he reasons, “It’s alright for them to be together. In fact, maybe there is some way I could use their gatherings and parties for my purposes.....Aha! I’ve got it!”

So parties in Rayad began changing. Instead of talking to each other and playing games so Rayadites could get to know each other and share the strengths and talents, a new trend began. Everyone who was “anyone” had these new kinds of parties.

“Have you been to a party over at our Rayad friend’s place yet?”

“No, I haven’t”

“You should go. It is really cool!”

“Oh yeah? What do you do?”

“Well, it isn’t like any other party you’ve ever been to. It’s pretty cool. All you do is go and sit down and watch stuff on the screen.”

“Stuff on the screen? Like what?”

“Oh, exciting, scary stuff that’s pretty good. There are a few scenes showing people eating chocolate cake, but no “biggy”. It’s cool!”

“People eating chocolate cake? But.....”

“Oh, it’s not bad and besides, there’s nothing anymore without a little bit of that. It’s just fun to get together with your friends.”

So Zynock stands back and watches his plot unfold.

“Let’s see now. They’re eating chocolate and they’re eating cake. They are listening to songs and watching movies about chocolate cake. They are becoming weaker and weaker although they’re not even aware of it yet because they haven’t actually eaten chocolate cake. They talk about it, make jokes about it, but they haven’t eaten it –yet! They are falling into my trap! They think their leaders and parents are square and stuffy. It’s very helpful when their friends tell them what I want them to hear. Friend, (so-called ‘friends’) are my greatest asset!”

“Hey!”, says a friend Rayadite, “have you seen the latest movie?”

“No”, comes the response. “I thought it was C-rated for chocolate.”

“No, it isn’t. It’s R-rated for Red. There’s no chocolate in it.”

And so Zynock continues his plotting to destroy Rayad and its people. Right now, he is designing a gorgeous garment, not in red –yet. It’s a luscious pink color.