

THE QUEST OF THE RAINBOW DRAGONS: A UU Hero's Story

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Part V - Installment eighteen - Rainbow Principle: **Blue**

"Believe in our ideas and act on them"

We affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process in our congregations and in society at large.

Our story thus far ...

Two children, named Jared and Delia, are on a great quest to bring peace and prosperity to the world. The quest, described in an ancient book called The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons, consists of seven tasks. Having completed four, Jared and Delia are now attempting to complete the fifth task, which is to follow the Road of Good Intentions to the place beyond the ends of the Earth where the Blue Dragon Golubnaya has created a utopia (a perfect place, with no war, suffering, sickness or death) for those who are "true to the core." The children don't know much about their task, but they do know that a single misstep on the Road of Good Intentions might cause them to lose their souls.

Our story continues ...

The cobblestone road that Delia and Jared walked along went up a little hill and around a corner. As they walked around the bend, they caught sight of a little village off in the distance.

Thatched huts surrounded a central square. Beyond the village proper, green, rolling meadows dotted with fluffy white sheep stretched into the distance. Delia and Jared started down the hill toward the village.

Strangely, they saw no one as they entered the town. No one peeked out a window. No one called out a greeting, or even a warning. Though there were signs hanging from some of the buildings that indicated they were shops - butcher, shoemaker, baker, even a tavern. The shop doors were shut, the shelves empty, and no one was behind the counter or sweeping the floor.

"This is very weird," said Delia. "Where are the people?" The road led right into the center of the square. Jared and Delia walked slowly and cautiously along, half expecting some ghost or other scary monster to jump out and say, "BOO!" At the center of the square, the road simply ended. Jared and Delia walked to the very edge. "Now what do we do?" asked Jared.

"Hello???" called Delia. "Is anyone there?" Suddenly, they heard a loud "pop" behind them. Whirling, they were surprised to see Olga, the head cook from Lord Sigismund's castle. They hadn't seen her since the day they left their home to begin this quest.

"Olga!" shouted Delia joyfully, and she began to run toward her, but as soon as her feet left the road, it was as if she'd run right smack into an invisible wall. She was so shocked, she was caught off guard and wound up falling to the ground.

"Child," said Olga, "When the two of you ran off, you left me short handed. I'm tired down to the bone, all of the time, now. My feet hurt, my back aches, I never get enough sleep. You come home right this instant. I've got plenty of pots that need scrubbing."

"Oh, Olga," said Delia, "You have no idea how much I miss home - and I miss you! I even miss the darn pots. Jared and I have a job to do here, though, and if we don't do it, well, things will keep getting worse and worse in the world. Can you forgive us? We'll come home as soon as we can."

"Taking off like you're so high and mighty! Boy, you've been so full of yourself, ever since you first picked up that pearl. I bet you wouldn't care a whit if you never saw old Olga ever again. You're off to important adventures."

"Don't say that!" said Jared. "You've been like a second mother to me. I can't wait to get home to tell you and our other friends all about our adventures. I miss you, Olga, and everyone else at the castle. About the only thing I *don't* miss are the pots!" Olga winked, and then vanished, with another 'pop'.

Next, Lady Marita, the sorceress, appeared. Tall and dignified, she held a long, bright staff, and magical power surrounded her like electricity. "The fate of the world rests on your shoulders," she boomed out, and her voice echoed off the surrounding houses.

"You must give up everything, everyone you know, everything you do, everything you are, for the sake of the quest. Do not give up, even if you face death!"

"We are doing our best," said Jared, a little confused. Marita didn't sound at all like she had back at the castle. Then, she had been warm and kind. Now, she was bossy and a bit mean.

Another 'pop' from behind them, and whirling, Jared saw one of the forest creatures who had guarded the cave of the first dragon they had met, the Red Dragon, Krasnova. Lady Marita raised her staff and began to shoot lightening bolts at the terrified reptilian forest guardian. "NO!" shouted Delia, who launched herself in between the sorceress and her intended victim.

"STOP!" shouted Jared, running toward Marita. Just like Delia, he bounced off an invisible wall and wound up sitting on the ground. He looked up at Marita and thought he saw, just for an instant, an approving gleam in her eye, and then she and the forest guardian both vanished, with another pop.

Next to appear was the cruel Lord Benedict the Brutal, who had captured the children and threatened to torture them! He looked quite helpless at the moment, though, stripped of his chain mail, his head shaved, hands tied behind his back. Bruises covered his face, and his lip had split. He looked at them, and a trace of his normal arrogance came back. A stone arced, seemingly flying out of nowhere, to hit the man on the shoulder. He grunted in pain.

Jared's hand itched to pick up a stone himself. He remembered the downtrodden, hopeless people of the village, robbed and hurt by the man cowering helplessly only a few feet away. He remembered the two children they had helped, whose parents had been rounded up and dragged off to work in Lord Benedict's mines. But he said out loud, "No. I won't hurt you

anymore than you've already been hurt. You can't cause any more trouble like that, so there's no reason to be cruel. Please," he looked around, hoping to see the person who had thrown the stone, "No more. Leave him be."

Lord Benedict vanished, and this time, a clear tone, like a bell, rang out. A deep, resonant voice announced, "YOU MAY PASS." Jared and Delia looked at the road. It was growing before their eyes, stone by stone, leading them out of the silent, abandoned village. A little confused, they talked it over and decided to keep going along the path.

Up a hill, around a corner, down a hill, and up another, and they could see in the distance, this time, a great shining city. As they entered, they saw that once again, the city was deserted. They walked along, and the road led them to a large stone building with the word "Courthouse" written over the door.

Walking up the steps, they entered a large room with benches extending on either side of a wide central aisle. Way up in the front, they saw a man with a white wig, holding a gavel. "Come on, come on," he called them. "We haven't got all day! Up you go, into the jury box."

Nervous and a bit disoriented, they did as they were told, and then turned to look at the courthouse. One side was filled with people who all looked strange or disreputable in one way or another. Some were filthy. Some were bent over, or covered in sores. Many were thin, almost skeletal. A few were very fat. All looked trapped and miserable.

On the other side of the aisle were people dressed in clean flowing robes, each one more beautiful than the last. Men, women, and children, they were all lovely to look at, with shiny faces and warm smiles.

"Well?" boomed the man with the wig. "Who's to be allowed into this city? The best and the brightest, to my left? Or the poor and the downtrodden, the lonely, the misfits, here on my right?"

Jared whispered to Delia, "How did we get to be the one to choose who gets in and who doesn't? I don't want to choose." "Neither do I," Delia whispered back. "But I don't think that we have a choice." "Can I know more about them?" Jared asked, and Delia nodded, also wanting more information.

"NO!" boomed the judge. "You must choose." Jared looked at Delia, who shrugged helplessly. Jared turned back to the judge. "We can't choose. We don't have enough information. But, it seems to me that everyone should at least have a chance to live here if they want to."

"RIGHT ANSWER," a bell-like voice declared, and in an instant, the courtroom vanished, and they stood on the road again. They followed it for a time, arriving after nightfall at a field - and another dead end. Above their head stretched a sky that looked as soft as black velvet, dotted with more stars than they could even begin to count.

"I wonder what's coming next," Delia wondered aloud, even as she enjoyed the beautiful sight. The answer came as the stars began to shimmer, and then danced their way down, becoming a spiral staircase that ended just next to where Delia and Jared stood.

"Are we supposed to climb it, do you think?" Delia wondered aloud.

"I have no idea," answered Jared. "I guess we should try." But as he headed toward the stairs, he felt the ground begin to tremble. With a loud crack, the earth split open. Delia, on the far side of the rapidly widening chasm, screamed in terror as the earth beneath her began to give way. Scrambling backward, she yelled to Jared, "Help me!" He turned and looked at the starry staircase. It was trembling, and the lower steps were beginning to dissolve. Jared knew he had a choice to make. If he went to Delia's rescue, he'd miss his chance to climb to the sky. But if he didn't ...

In the end, it wasn't much of a dilemma at all. Running full tilt, he leaped across to the other side of the chasm and ran over to where Delia was hanging from the edge.

Throwing himself down on his belly, he grabbed a hold of her wrists and began to wriggle backward. When they were safe, the shaking stopped, and everything was quiet again. The crack in the ground closed, and the stars returned to their normal places.

"This is really weird," said Jared.

Exhausted, Delia answered, "You said it. Do you think we're allowed to take a break? I really need some sleep, and food wouldn't hurt either."

"OF COURSE," said a bell-like voice. "WE'LL RESUME THE TESTS TOMORROW. SLEEP WELL."

As the children turned around, looking for the source of the voice, they noticed a little hut that hadn't been there before. Upon entering, they saw two comfortable beds, a warm fire. A clean kitchen table was filled with hearty food. They ate their fill, and tumbled into their beds, exhausted.

***Dragon Task:** What do you look for in a friend? What does loyalty mean to you?*