

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

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Part V - Installment nineteen - 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, a boy named Jared and a girl named Delia, are trying to fulfill an ancient prophecy found in a book titled The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons. They need to complete seven tasks, each involving a different dragon. Right now, they're working on the fifth task, trying to find the Blue Dragon, Golubnaya. They've had to jump off a cliff to arrive at the magical Road of Good Intentions, beyond the end of the world. Strange things have happened so far on this road. Golubnaya seems to be testing them to see if they are worthy of living in her utopia—a place she's created that's completely perfect.

Our story continues ...

Jared and Delia woke up with the sun, washed up, ate the steaming hot breakfast that sat waiting for them on the table, and then headed back outside. They had taken only a few steps when they heard another "pop" sound behind them. Spinning around, they saw that the hut where they had spent the night had vanished.

Feeling a little nervous, they made their way back to the cobblestone path. "Good morning," said Delia tentatively.

"GOOD MORNING," the voice that had spoken the day before boomed back. Then another voice, more familiar, chimed in.

"Golubnaya, they are children, and your next set of tests are quite dangerous. Are you really prepared to hold them to the same standards as adults?"

It sounded like Krasnova, the Red Dragon who they'd met on their very first quest!

"THEY KNEW THE STAKES WHEN THEY BEGAN THIS JOURNEY. THEY MUST PASS MY TESTS TO ENTER UTOPIA!"

"I know. I'm just suggesting that you take it a little easy on them, my sister," said Krasnova.

"You were a child once, too, though it was so long ago you may have forgotten. I haven't. You were a real brat!"

"KRASNOVA!" said Golubnaya's voice indignantly. Jared and Delia couldn't keep from giggling.

"OH, ALL RIGHT," Golubnaya's voice continued. "ARE YOU READY, CHILDREN, FOR YOUR NEXT SET OF TESTS?"

"I guess so," said Delia. "But, before we begin, may I ask why you are testing us this way?"

"OF COURSE," answered Golubnaya. "LIKE MY BROTHER AND SISTER DRAGONS, I ONCE WALKED AMONG HUMAN PEOPLE, ENCOURAGING THEM TO LIVE IN ACCORD WITH THEIR DEEPLY HELD VALUES. I BELIEVED THAT ONCE PEOPLE KNEW THE RIGHT THING TO DO, THEY SHOULD AND WOULD DO IT! ONLY IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN, I WATCHED PEOPLE SAY ONE THING, AND ACT ANOTHER. IT BROKE MY HEART.

"SO I LEFT THE WORLD OF HUMANS, AND CAME HERE, USING MY MAGIC TO CREATE A PLACE OUTSIDE OF TIME AND SPACE WHERE THOSE WHO ARE WORTHY CAN LIVE. I ONLY ALLOW INTO MY

UTOPIA PEOPLE WHO ALWAYS, WITHOUT FAIL, DO THE RIGHT THING."

"How many people live there, then?" asked Delia.

"SADLY," said Golubnaya, "AT THE MOMENT, NONE. A FEW HAVE PASSED MY TESTS AND LIVED THERE FOR A WHILE, BUT THEY ALWAYS DO SOMETHING WRONG. THEY MAKE MISTAKES. THEY FORGET THINGS.

THEY HAVE DAYS WHERE THEY'RE LAZY OR DISTRACTED. FRANKLY, OVER THE YEARS, I'VE BECOME CONVINCED THAT NO ONE WILL EVER BE GOOD ENOUGH TO DESERVE THE BEAUTIFUL PLACE I'VE CREATED.

"ACTUALLY, HAVING YOU CHILDREN TRY TO GET IN - WELL I'M HOPING AGAIN, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME. YOU ARE YOUNG, SO MAYBE I CAN TEACH YOU PROPERLY AND TRAIN YOU TO BE PERFECT."

Delia swallowed hard. "With all due respect, Golubnaya, I'm not sure I would want to live in a place where I had to be perfect. I'd be so scared, I wouldn't have any fun."

"WHAT?" asked the dragon.

"I have to agree with Delia," said Jared. "Besides," he continued, "We're not really here because we want to live in your utopia. We're here on a quest, hoping to bring peace and prosperity back to the real world, the world you left."

"OH," said Golubnaya, clearly disappointed. "ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN A PLACE WHERE EVERYTHING IS PERFECT? WHERE NO ONE SUFFERS OR GETS SICK OR IS MEAN OR ANGRY? IT'S REALLY QUITE LOVELY, YOU'LL SEE. HOW ABOUT I SHOW YOU AROUND? MAYBE YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND?"

Well, this sounded like a great idea to Delia and Jared. Anything but more strange, scary tests!

"Okay," said Delia. "Show us around."

"WONDERFUL!" said Golubnaya. She appeared before them with a 'pop', a sweet looking woman wearing a blue dress and a crisp white apron. Her gray hair was pulled back into a tidy bun, and her cheeks were round and rosy. Her blue eyes sparkled, and she would have looked like a friendly and warm person, except that her lips were pursed tight, as if she'd just eaten something sour, and her hands were clasped primly together, rather than extended in greeting.

"Let's go back to the city," and with another 'pop' their surroundings changed. Tall, beautiful building surrounded them, made of gleaming white marble, with fountains and trees out front and lots of windows.

"If you like music," and Delia and Jared both nodded, "all you have to do is call it out, and it is played, perfectly, for you. Watch! I would like to hear Beethoven's Fifth Symphony."

Immediately, they were surrounded by the booming chords: bah-da-dum-DAH...

"Or perhaps you'd prefer the theater?"

With another pop, the music stopped and their surroundings changed to resemble a darkened theater, with three soft, red, plush seats set just above the stage, less than six feet away.

"Take a seat!" said Golubnaya, and then she clapped her hands and performers appeared on stage. They remembered every line, every cue, every stage direction. They made no mistakes, but moved flawlessly through a scene from a play by William Shakespeare. Delia and Jared watched with their mouths open. When the scene was over, the players simply vanished, leaving Delia and Jared clapping awkwardly for an empty stage.

"Are you hungry? The best food in the world is yours for the taking, perfectly prepared. All you have to do is name what you want. For example, ask for a slice of chocolate cake. Go on! Ask!"

"Okay," said Jared. "May I please have a slice of chocolate cake?"

Two thick slices of gooey chocolate cake, on small white plates, complete with forks and napkins, appeared in Jared and Delia's hands. They each took a bite, and sure enough, it tasted wonderful.

"When you tire of the city, you can go to the country simply by saying you'd like to go to the country!"

With another pop, the walls of the theater vanished and they were back in the grassy meadow.

"Or, if you'd prefer, village life," and pop, they were in the village.

Jared and Delia felt confused and overwhelmed. Their heads were spinning! When you're used to your surroundings staying pretty solid, it'd quite disconcerting to have things pop in and out of existence around you.

Delia placed her plate of cake on the ground, where it promptly vanished. "Yes, I see, it's all quite lovely, but Golubnaya, the people we see seem to vanish with a 'pop' before our eyes. And, I hate to say it, but it's kind of creepy, how everything is perfect but also completely deserted. I'm also wondering what would happen to the rest of the world while we were here? Would the Quest we are on fail? And what about my friends and family? How will I know what's happened to the people I care about? Can I write letters and things?"

"Well," said Golubnaya, "No. It didn't occur to me that anyone might want to have contact with the outside world. It's so messy, and unpleasant. And dangerous! I've seen some of what happens up there - robbers, and bullies, and sneaky murderers even. It's simply horrible. And wars! Don't even get me started. Oh, no, if we let anything happening on the outside into this utopia, we'd be worried, and scared. Here it's safe, and peaceful, but only because I don't let anything bad come in. Here in my utopia, no one ever says or does anything hurtful! Nothing ever causes you pain, or even discomfort. Anything you want, anything your heart desires, I can make happen. If you're lonely, I'll magic you up some friends, and they'll be perfect friends, always happy and kind and fun to be with."

"Would they be like the actors?" asked Delia. "Because it felt like they were ... I don't know ... *hollow*, somehow. They made the motions, said all the right things, but there were no *people* inside of them. It was like watching a fancy, life-sized puppet show."

Golubnaya's eyes filled with tears. "They were so pretty. None of them forgot their lines. Why wouldn't you like them? What wasn't to like? They were perfect!"

"Too perfect," said Jared, "and they didn't really *see* us. It's like we didn't exist to them.

Part of being a friend is letting the other person know that they matter to you. Then there's the fact that they vanished at the end of the scene. Where are they now, anyway?"

"Well, they really only exist in my mind."

"They exist only in your mind? What's the difference, then, between talking to them and talking to you directly? Besides, we don't want to talk to just any old imaginary people.

We want to talk to the people we love - to our families and our friends."

"That's just not possible," said Golubnaya sadly. Then, perking up a bit, she said, "I know! I could use my magic to make it seem as if your friends and family were here, too."

"Yes," said Jared, "But it's not really them, is it?"

"Not exactly," said Golubnaya. "It would *look* just like them, though."

"Would they vanish, like the other people we've seen here?"

"Yes, when you don't want them anymore. They'll be here, they'll say just what you want them to say, or what *I* want them to say. Then they'll go away when you don't need them anymore. They'll be perfect."

"That's just it," said Delia. "The people we love aren't perfect. It wouldn't feel like them. Sometimes what makes a person less than perfect is what makes them interesting, even what makes them lovable. So, if it is up to me, I don't think I want to stay here in utopia - though it's very nice, and so are you." She smiled at Golubnaya, and then looked at Jared with a question in her eyes.

"No; me neither. I'm sorry Golubnaya," he agreed.

At first, Golubnaya looked sad, but then she looked at them again, and they could see a growing anger in her eyes. Though she still looked like a sweet little old lady, the voice that came out of her mouth sounded huge and terrible.

"THEN YOU HAVE FAILED, AND YOUR FATE IS SEALED. YOU WILL NOT FIND YOUR WAY TO UTOPIA, NOR SHALL YOU RETURN TO YOUR LIVES." With another 'pop' (and oh, how Jared and Delia were coming to really dislike that sound) everything went dark.

"Delia?" asked Jared. He got no response. He couldn't see or hear or smell or taste anything. Only darkness.

"Jared?" asked Delia. She, too, was trapped in a dark place, separated from her friend by Golubnaya's magic.

In their separate silent cells, both Jared and Delia began to cry.

Dragon Task: List some of your favorite people. Think of the things you like about them. Then think about the things they've done that you haven't liked as much. Is there such a thing as a perfect person? A perfect friend?