

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

By Elizabeth H. Stevens

Part VI Installation twenty-one - Rainbow Principle 6: Indigo

"Insist on freedom, justice and peace for all people, "

We affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.

Our story thus far ...

Two ordinary children, Jared and Delia, guided by a funny looking magical creature named Les, have successfully completed five of seven tasks described in an ancient prophecy: The Quest of the Rainbow Dragons. The prophecy indicates that if they are able to complete the last two tasks, the Rainbow Dragons will fly, raining peace and prosperity on all the land.

Our story continues ...

After their meeting with the Blue Dragon, Golubnaya, Jared and Delia returned with Les to the castle of Lord Sigismund. "Lord Sigismund will be able to tell us what we need to know to find Lazyurov, the Indigo Dragon. I don't follow politics closely enough, myself," Les had said.

The children were exhausted, and welcomed the opportunity to visit their friends at the castle. They arrived in the middle of a sunny afternoon. Dusty, sweaty and travel weary, they wanted to sneak into the castle without causing a ruckus. Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way. The minute they walked through the gate, the word began to spread among all the inhabitants of the castle, from the youngest stableboy to Lord Sigismund himself. *Everyone* wanted to come and greet the returned adventurers, and to hear all about what had happened in the time they'd been gone. They were mobbed!

It was Lady Marita, the beautiful sorceress, who saw how tired the children looked. She whispered something into Lord Sigismund's ear, and he clapped his hands and announced loudly, "QUIET! We need to let Jared and Delia wash up and rest a bit. If they feel up to it, perhaps they can tell the story to everyone in the main hall after dinner. Then, they need only go through it once."

"Thank you," said Jared gratefully, and Delia nodded in agreement. It felt wonderful to be back home, even though they knew it was only for a brief time. To be back in familiar surroundings, to have access to the baths and to their comfortable beds - it felt like heaven.

Meanwhile, Les approached Lord Sigismund for a private audience.

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As they headed into dinner after their lovely rest, Jared said to Delia, "I don't think I appreciated this place and all its comforts back when we lived here. After being on the road, I am so grateful for things like the bath, and my bed, and doors with locks, and roofs that don't leak ..."

"Not to mention our friends and families," said Delia, whose parents had sat in her chamber, quietly, just watching her sleep. Jared could see them now, just a few steps away, watching Delia with love in their eyes, and pride, too. It made him miss his own parents, who lived on a farm an hour's ride from the castle.

The very moment the thought formed in his mind, he saw them! Some kind person had sent for his parents while he slept, and there they were, across the hall - the two wonderful fathers, Dad and Pop, who had raised him from infancy - a little windswept, but with huge grins on their faces. He ran across to them and they enfolded him in big, rough hugs.

Everyone ate quickly, looking forward to the story that Jared, Delia and Les would tell. When the food had been cleared away, Lord Sigismund looked questioningly at Jared, who turned to Les with a question in his eyes. Having just been reunited with his parents, Jared very much wanted to stay with them. The prospect of speaking aloud to a huge hall full of people made him feel just a little queasy.

As if he could read Jared's mind, Les pushed away from the table and stepped into the middle of the hall. Clearing his throat, he began the tale:

"As you know, we left this place several months ago on a quest - a quest to bring peace and prosperity to the land." Les was a masterful storyteller, and even Jared, who had lived through it all, found himself enthralled, listening carefully so as not to miss a single word.

Les described their trip to the forest, their encounter with the reptilian forest guardians, and the way they had befriended the Red Dragon, Krasnova. Then he

told of Jared's meeting with Yantarov, the Amber Dragon, in the land of dreams. "Jared faced the mirror of justice, and did not like what he saw. The Amber Dragon let him live, but withheld his blessing for the time being."

Les described the trip to Alexandria, where they met the young librarian's assistant, Polly. Polly had accompanied them to the great library of Atlantis, and had stayed to help the Yellow Dragon, Zheltizna, search for clues on how people could accept one another and all of the different opinions people have about the great mysteries in life.

Next, he told of the trip to the center of the volcano, where they met the Green Dragon, Zolotov, and restored his eyesight with some lichen scraped from the walls of the underground passageway that had taken them to Atlantis. He praised Jared and Delia's bravery and caring.

Finally, he described their difficult and strange journey along the magical Road of Good Intentions, a place that existed solely in the mind of the Blue Dragon, Golubnaya. He did not go into great detail, but instead described how Jared and Delia had freed the dragon from a prison of her own making, and the way her brother, the Amber Dragon Yantarov, had been so pleased with what he had witnessed that he, too, had agreed to follow where Jared and Delia led.

"Now, we prepare to confront Lazyurov, the Indigo Dragon, who prowls along the edges of the earth's fiercest battles, striking terror into the hearts of the soldiers and their generals, hoping, vainly, to keep them from fighting. We near the end of the quest, with only two tasks left to complete, but they are the most dangerous and the most difficult of all."

As Les brought the story to a close, everyone started talking at once. "What does he mean, they've got two tasks left to complete? I thought they were finished!"

"Can you believe that two children were able to keep their heads about them that way?" "I'm surprised that they survived, never mind that they completed their tasks."

Jared's parents had gone pale. "You ... you're not done yet?" asked Pop. "No," said Jared quietly. "We're just here for a break and to get some information from Lord Sigismund."

"The next tasks are the most dangerous? And the most difficult?" asked Dad.

"I guess so. Les knows better than I."

"What would happen," Pop said tremulously, "if we asked you not to continue? If we kept you safe at home?"

"I guess the whole quest would fail," said Jared.

"And ... if we don't care about the quest as much as we care about our son being safe and whole?" he continued.

"Pop, I've got to do it. I'm the chosen one."

"I know," Pop sighed. "But you're also my son. I hate the thought of you putting yourself in harm's way, no matter how good the cause. Couldn't someone else go?"

"I don't know why the Pearl of Wisdom chose me, but I do know that, having been chosen, I have to do my best to complete the quest, even if it means risking my life."

Watching the tears well up in his Pop's eyes, Jared felt terribly guilty. He didn't know what else to say. Then he felt Les coming up to stand next to him. "Sirs," the furry little guide began, "I'm looking out for him as best I can, and your son - well, he's a fine brave boy, growing into an unusually wise young man."

"I know, I know," said Pop. "But he's still my baby, you see?"

"I do," said Les. "He's lucky to be loved this way. Fact is, the love you have for him is part of what's given him the courage to do what needs to be done."

"He's got to see it through," chimed in Dad. "But please, keep him safe for us?"

"I'll do my best," said Les. "With a little luck, the next time we come home, it will be for good. Now, Jared, you need to get some sleep. We leave first thing tomorrow morning."

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Saying goodbye to their families and friends the next morning was, Jared and Delia agreed, the hardest thing they'd done so far. All day, they felt a little sad and lonely as they walked.

At dinner that night, Les was uncharacteristically quiet, as well. After they'd eaten, as they sat near the fire, he spoke at last. "It's not easy, sending your child off into the world to do good. I respect your parents tremendously, and I can see how much it hurts them to let you go."

"Yes, it's hard," said Jared quietly. Delia started to cry again.

"Almost every parent feels that way about their children," Les continued. "That's why war is such a destructive thing. Even if you believe your child is fighting for the right reasons, it's hard to watch them put themselves into danger."

"Les," said Jared, "You said back at the castle that these last two quests are the most dangerous ones yet. Why is that?"

"Well," answered Les grimly, "Because of where they are going to take you. Lazyurov lives at the edge of the battlefield. He isn't particularly dangerous, himself, but anytime you're close to the fighting, you're in danger of getting hurt, either by accident, or because someone mistakes you for a soldier. If I read the prophecy correctly, you'll visit battlegrounds with him, and he will show you both sides of every conflict. Though I think he will try to keep you safe, I guess I don't completely trust his ability to protect you under those circumstances."

"Bagranka, the Violet Dragon, is wild and somewhat unpredictable. She, too, is known to prowl around many dark and dangerous places. In her case, I don't think she will even try to shelter you from the harsher aspects of life. She doesn't dwell near humans at all, but keeps to the places that are untouched and unchanged. The places she will take you are untamed, the way she is."

"Les, why can't you come with us, to protect us?" asked Delia, who felt very small and sad that night.

"Oh, child, I wish I could. Just as your parents would if they could-- but it's the two of you who have to do this thing. So we, your parents and I, will wait, and hope, and love you no matter what. It's all we can do."

"All right, then," said Les, after a long pause, "Let's get some sleep."

Troubled, but determined to do the right thing, Delia and Jared settled in and spent a restless night.

Dragon Task: Read Julia Ward Howe's "Mothers' Day Proclamation," and talk about the origins of Mothers' Day.

Mothers' Day Proclamation

By Julia Ward Howe

Arise, then, women of this day!

Arise all women who have hearts, whether our baptism be that of water or of fears!

Say firmly: "We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies.

Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.

Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.

We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.

From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own.

It says "Disarm, Disarm!"

The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.

Blood does not wipe our dishonor nor violence indicate possession.

As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

Let them then solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace,

And each bearing after their own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar, but of God.

Julia Ward Howe, Boston , 1870

(Reading #573 in our hymnbook, Singing The Living Tradition)