

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

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Part VI      Installment twenty-four - 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 ...*

Delia and Jared have met and befriended six of the seven Rainbow Dragons. Currently, they are working with Lazyurov, the Indigo Dragon, who works to bring peace to war torn lands, one person at a time. In the night, they had met Theodore, a farmboy turned soldier who was, according to Lazyurov, in danger of losing his humanity. He's told them of the plan to raid a farmhouse the next day, and of his plans to participate in the raid despite his misgivings. In an act of either bravery or stupidity, Jared has left the protection of the Indigo Dragon in hopes of finding out what happens to Theodore.

*Our story continues ...*

Telling himself he could stay hidden in the shadows, and that he wouldn't get involved, Jared snuck along the ridge top to a boulder overlooking the camp where Theodore and the other soldiers prepared for their raid. On the other side of the ridge, further down, he could see a farmhouse standing next to a stream. He watched as a small figure hauled water from the stream, and a slightly larger figure yoked two horses to a plough and went to work. These must be the people who would be the victims of today's conflict. Jared felt his heart pounding.

Maybe he'd get involved after all. Running low to the ground, he headed toward the farmhouse he could see in the distance. Focused on his goal, he didn't see or hear the soldiers in the camp saddle up and ride out. He arrived at the farm out of breath, sweat streaming down his face. "There are soldiers coming! You've got to get out!" He yelled.

The man in the field looked at him, puzzled, and said a few words in a language Jared didn't understand. Without the dragon's magic to help, he had no way to communicate with these people in the land so far from his home. Frustrated he began to pantomime soldiers, riding on horses, with torches and swords. He turned to the hillside to point out the direction from which the soldiers would come, only to discover he was too late. They were thundering down, heading straight for him.

As they approached, he saw Theodore out in front, and he saw the moment when the boy recognized his nighttime visitor. He flinched, and involuntarily pulled back, while Jared looked up at him, a plea for mercy in his eyes. Then he kicked his horse and pulled out ahead of his comrades, fear, panic, and confusion clearly written on his face.

They had no time to talk, no time to do much of anything. The leader of the band of marauders shouted something to Theodore in a harsh voice, and he whirled and answered, again in a language that Jared neither spoke nor understood. Jared closed his eyes and concentrated, focusing on his memory of their conversation the night before.

"I know this boy," said Theodore. "He is not one of them. We must spare him."

"He tried to warn the Picts! He will die for his spying ways!" roared the commander.

Just then a younger child came running out to see what the noise was about. He saw the soldiers, saw his father standing, pale and scared, saw Theodore, trying to halt the rush of horses and men. Theodore saw him, and a look of recognition passed between them.

"I will die along with him, then," said Theodore, "For I will not be a part of this. What we are about to do is wrong. I know, because it's what the Picts did to me."

"Exactly!" said the commander. "Don't you want your revenge?"

"Yes," said Theodore honestly. "But these aren't the ones who hurt my family and burned down our house. They're just *people*."

"They are Picts!" said the commander.

"*They are people!*" Theodore replied, more firmly this time. "I will not let you harm them."

"Then you will die too!" roared the commander, but behind him, the rest of his troops had pulled up. They had adopted Theodore as a sort of mascot in camp. They all saw themselves as surrogate fathers, uncles, maybe an older brother or two. He was one of their own, and their commander was threatening to kill him along with the rest. Jared watched as, one by one, first indecision and then confusion and then resolution played over their faces. Weapons were sheathed. Torches were extinguished.

The commander turned, and was shocked to see his loyal troops, effectively mutinying, refusing to carry out their mission. "I will kill you if I have to do it myself!" And he thundered forward, not toward Theodore, but toward Jared, who, undoubtedly, he saw as the source of all this trouble. Jared felt his life flash before his eyes. He'd made a mistake, a horrible mistake, and now he would let everyone down - Delia, the dragons, Les, all the people back home with Lord Sigismund ... He closed his eyes and waited for the blow, but it never came.

When he opened his eyes, he saw that the other soldiers had stopped their former leader, taking away his sword and holding firmly on to the reins of his horse. He watched while they argued and argued, back and forth and around in circles. In the end, it seemed that the soldiers who wanted to turn back were winning. Theodore left the circle and headed over to where Jared stood, puzzled.

"Looks like you'll live to see another day, my friend. And I'm stuck being the conscience for a bunch of hardened mercenaries. Who'd have thought? God only knows what they're going to do next, but I promise you, it won't involve burning down farmhouses. I guess it wasn't easier to follow orders after all, hey?"

"I guess not!" Jared replied. Theodore smiled at Jared, and then spurred his horse in pursuit of the rest of his family. Meanwhile, Jared, exhausted from the nearly sleepless night and his long run, and overwhelmed by the shock and relief he felt at not being killed, sat down wearily on the ground.

The farmer helped him to his feet and half carried him into the house, offering him a comfortable pallet near the fireplace. Jared fell into a deep, peaceful sleep. When he woke up, Les was there, wiping his face with a cool cloth.

"You did the right thing, kiddo. I'm proud of you," he said. Then he continued. "Listen. Delia and Lazyurov will be back for you after dark, but this is the last time you'll see me in this form. So there are a few things I want to tell you."

"What do you ..." Jared began.

"Hush, Jared. There's no time. Just listen, and remember. Unlike the other dragons you've met, Bagranka is dangerous to you. You need to approach her with great care. To succeed at this next-to-last task, you'll need all your courage and all your treasures."

"But I don't ..."

"I said *hush!* Remember, animals are people too. If you treat them that way, she won't feel like she needs to defend herself. Keep your hands in her sight at all times. And stay calm! Bagranka can smell fear.

"She won't let you climb up, and she won't speak to you. But if you do as I've instructed, she will show you the way. In the depths of the cave, in the bottom of the still pool, you'll find Bagranka's treasure. This is important Jared. *Do not try to take it.* It is hers to keep, not yours to add to the others. It is *not* a token, it is her *heart*. When she has shown it to you, your task with her is complete."

"When you exit from the cave, the time will have come for you to call on all the dragons for their flight. *They will not fly without the Rainbow Dragon to lead them.* You'll need to call on the Rainbow Dragon by name, and no, I can't tell you what it is. You need to figure it out for yourself. Just this clue: She goes by many names, and he has no name, they take many shapes and sometimes no shape at all. All around, and inside every person, the spirit of the Rainbow Dragon dwells. Read the familiar name written in your heart, and speak it, and the Rainbow Dragon will come."

"I'm proud of you, more proud than you can know; and I'm indebted to you. It's been an honor and a privilege being your guide, and I hope to see you again soon." With an encouraging smile, Les vanished, leaving Jared alone with the Pict family of farmers, who offered him food and drink. After dinner, a great "whooshing" sound announced the arrival of Lazyurov.

Jared waved goodbye to the family, and headed over to where the dragon and his best friend waited for him. He climbed onto Lazyurov's back again.

"WE GO TO BAGRANKA!" roared Lazyurov, and spiraled high into the star filled sky.

***Dragon Task:** Think about the movies and TV shows you've seen that portray war. Do you think they are honest representations? Why or why not?*