

In the endlessly swaying trees of Filltroske, a queen has been kidnapped. Seven individuals amidst a group of others form a search party. They enter the forest but do not leave unchanged.

Those With Virtue Rescue The Queen

by Thomas R. Young

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THOSE WITH
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THOMAS R. YOUNG



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Table of Contents

Prologue	5
Chapter 1: New Bearers Chosen.....	7
Chapter 2: Captured by a Dragon	10
Chapter 3: Queen Kidnapped.....	15
Chapter 4: Between Evil and Mimicry	23
Chapter 5: Two's Company	31
Chapter 6: Stranger Than Fiction.....	35
Chapter 7: Directional Confrontations.....	39
Chapter 8: From Cradles to Graves	50
Chapter 9: Music and Darkness in the Soul.....	63
Chapter 10: The Reapings of Puppetry	71
Chapter 11: Cold As Ice.....	89
Chapter 12: Son of Hate and Daughter of Fear.....	106
Chapter 13: Those Endless Swaying Trees.....	120
Chapter 14: A Sweet Girl's Fractured Innocence	130
Chapter 15: Progression Aggression.....	143
Chapter 16: Love and Life, Hate and Strife.....	153
Chapter 17: Sadistic Sunny and Virtuous Hate.....	169
Chapter 18: The Elementals of Treachery	186
Chapter 19: Heart of Glass, Empty and Dark	202
Chapter 20: Pandora's Box	215

Chapter 1: New Bearers Chosen

Perfelot. A pure city renowned with pleasures of nobility was surprised one day at the announcement by its queen that certain individuals would be chosen by seven small stones. She hushed nearby reporters taking notes with a raised finger to her lips and worried eyes trying to concentrate on the task. Most in the audience, much of whom were nobles, could tell this was not a ceremony of happiness. They weren't even sure what bizarre ceremony this could be. Some tried to ask the Queen but were quickly silenced by not only her but royal guards.

The queen was one fair to all in the land. Able to manipulate the sun's movement and harness the celestial body's fiery strength through magical means, few topped her strength. She retained a magical prowess that ensured potions were created with the means to revive fallen bodies with certain limitations of course. Fair, strong, benign, resplendent are words that only barely scratched the surface of her character. Little shook her strong countenance albeit this day wrought with it something wholly different.

Heavy silence filled the air as she opened a small purple box with gold trimmings wherein were found seven small stones pressing against its walls moving on their own with a purpose. The force at which the stones were pressing the interior was getting stronger having already scared her at time of first discovery when falling to the floor in the treasure chamber of the castle. The box had been found moving on its own by the guards and surprised her in that chamber.

After the discovery in the treasure chamber, the queen had ordered a gathering in the courtyard 'neath a famous statue depicting those with original virtue fighting a god of chaos. She carefully looked over the statue's details. Seven individuals in combat against an otherworldly seemingly immortal horrific chaotic being comprised of every existing known, and unknown, animal body part. The queen drifted her eyes from the statue that made her shudder to the purple box in her hold as it slightly moved about. As reporters, guards, and nobility encircled, she sighed with a deep breath.

"May this day be but a dream," Queen Angelica wished turning the box upside down spilling the seven stones onto the ground watching with the growing crowd as said stones rolled off to their destinations. The queen had ordered guards to follow each stone to its new owner and bring them hastily back to the castle. There would be much to discuss. There would be much preparation and training offered.

When each new owner of a stone was discovered, they were indeed hastily brought back to the castle. It almost seemed like an arrest if seen by a third party. Violet, a tailor living in a small neighboring town, was absolutely bewildered when taken by the guards after her small stone broke a window of her shop hopping into hand then guards bashing the door down. Worse still, her sister, Claire, had been taken, too, whom was but a child. The stone had moved into a school room heading for the little girl. She yelped looking down at the stone then again when guards rushed the school room full of children trying to learn.

A farmer famous for her strength, Josie, wiped her brow in the midday sun after toiling among soil and trees getting ready for the next harvest. No sooner had she wiped that sweat away when guards surrounded her and some small stone that made its way into her harvest's gathering basket. She thought the guard had come for rassing and that's exactly what they got.

Soaring among the clouds, a free-spirited speedy woman, Avril, grinned ear to ear feeling the wind through her hair. However, that grin became a grimace as a small stone contacted her noggin. As she rubbed her head, guards with flight capability grabbed underneath each arm before she could speed off.

Even into a bakery after one named Paige did a stone and royal guards ensue. Prone to giving surprises, herself, but not wanting to receive one that day, the baker threw confectionary any which way she could while screaming overly dramatically. On the other hand, Angelica's protege, Princess Rebecca and shy animal caretaker, Willow, came quietly and did not throw sugary contents at the guards.

"This day you have all been blessed to receive stones of legend," the queen feigned a smile and informed the individuals now standing before her. "We are counting on your protection, and these stones will provide means of power to do so. Although the future holds arduous barriers for you to overcome, we hold it close to our hearts that you shall surpass any and all awaiting challenges."

There were comforts given by queen and land alike. Goods and services rendered that pampered the chosen individuals to no end. Training was ensured, too, in combat. This was truly a blessing they felt. How could it be anything other than that? Sure, the stones after having chosen their new owners shared memories of all those that came before. Those with virtue shared memories with others of virtue via these stones. This included additional sparks of immense offered strength and magical affluence. The memories of those with virtue that held the stones before these individuals were anything but pleasant. Clear warnings of the arduous trials ahead. Perhaps more accurately described in some cases to be nightmarish memories sometimes. But each new stone holder the queen had gathered to this place and time resigned to push these memories to the back of their minds, or at least tried to.

The farmer, Josie, held her stone with humility and felt relief that her hard working family now had plenty of food on the table.

The princess, Rebecca, held her stone with patience and felt her time of recognition might had finally come after so many years of servitude to the land.

The soft-spoken woman with feathery wings, Willow, held her stone with kindness and felt she could provide protection to those who needed it most especially animals.

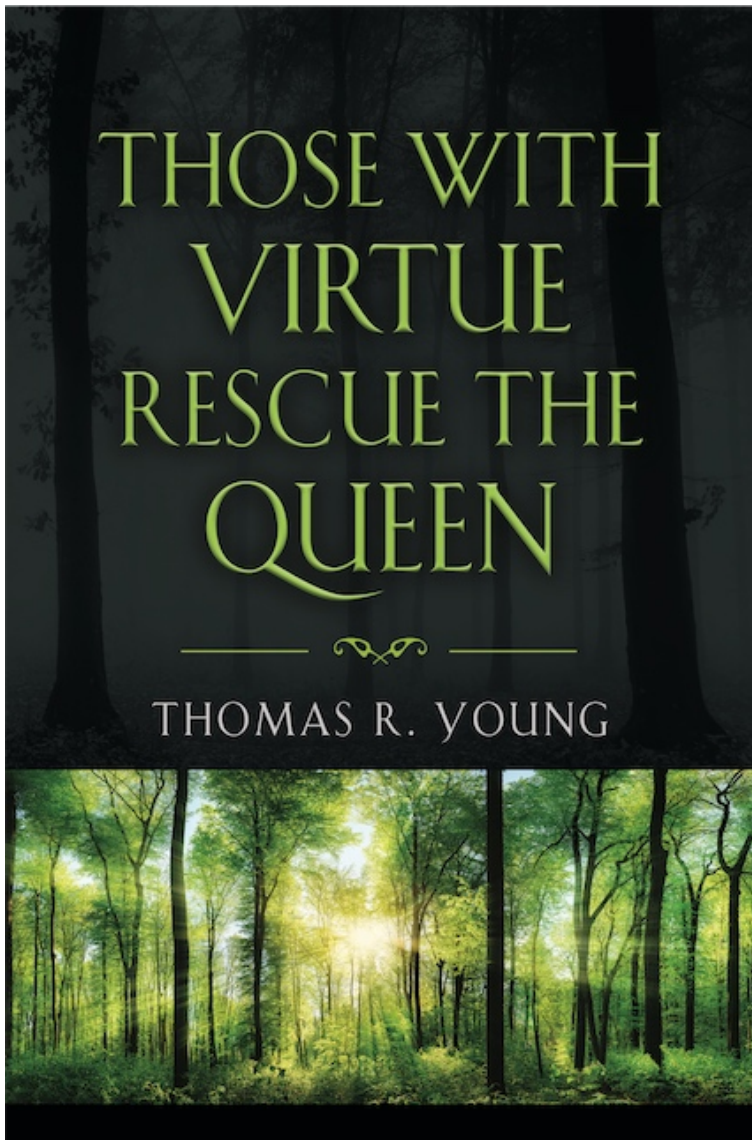
The baker woman, Paige, held her stone with temperance, vibrating intensely in excitement and restraint as though having a seizure. Irony at its finest.

The radical free-spirited speedy flying woman, Avril, held her stone with diligence repeating many times 'she's got this'.

The tailor, Violet, held her stone with charity asking if anyone else wanted it trying to hurriedly get rid of the thing. Again, irony at its finest.

The tailor's younger sister, Claire, held her stone with chastity expressing a most confused look at her sister's actions.

Each bearer had been given training and surely some really needed it. The world was not peaceful, not everywhere at least. There was plenty of crime and violence outside of Perfelot. Basic combat skills were instilled as were survival tactics. The bearers of virtue needed it. Military instincts were trained and instilled into the bearers, too. An enemy was to be fought until the end. Get the mission done. Violence was to be allowed and licensed. They each believed this was a part of protecting the land. No matter what it takes. No matter what lives are taken. It was a great offering in addition to being pampered. However, as they say, all good things must come to an end.



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