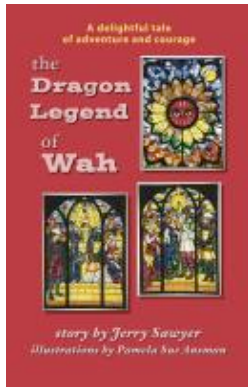


A delightful tale
of adventure and courage

the
Dragon
Legend
of
Wah



story by Jerry Sawyer
illustrations by Pamela Sue Ansman



In the Year of the Clown, in a land with two moons, Je-Free sets out to tame the dragon, but more importantly, his brave task must help him with the heart of the Princess of Vlee. He is aided by little brother Je-Free, who must make sure the Princess knows the name of the hero -- in case he never returns. This enchanting tale combines adventure, humor, and family values for all ages.

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THE DRAGON LEGEND OF WAH



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First Edition

Written by Jerry A. Sawyer
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**The Dragon Legend
of Wah**
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CHAPTER 1

In the time of Freja, in the Duchy of Wah-Vlee-Dah, near the village of Vlee, there dwelt a dragon. Its name was Toe-Nee. It was said to be "fierce and terrible," but for generations, no one had ever dared get close enough to engage it. Nevertheless, the legends say it is so, so it must be so.

Toe-Nee spent most of its time on a ledge outside the entrance to a cave in which it lived, so the legends say. From the edge of the ledge, Toe-Nee would have a perfect view of the entire valley, for the ledge was located near the top of B'taral Mountain, the largest of the Taral Range, and was actually, because this side of B'taral was so steep, almost directly above the village of Vlee.

Vlee had long been the stopping place for wayfarers, sojourners, minstrels, muleteers, caravans, circuses and the like, for not only was it the only village between Wah, the Capital, and Dah, the port city, but it was also the home of Princess Je-Nee, whose lineage of beautiful maiden ancestors went back for centuries. Je-Nee was a personage (as were her ancestors) upon whom wayfarers, sojourners, etc., would go out of their way to cast their eyes, such was her (and their) beauty. Such is the stuff of legends. And the legends say it is so, so it must be so.

At this same time of Freja, there also lived in Vlee a jeweler's son by the name of Ha-Ree. Ha-Ree's eyes had once been cast upon Princess Je-Nee, and, ever since that day, Ha-Ree had been unable to think of practically anyone or anything else. He had been smitten -- as smitten as any before him by the beautiful Princesses of Vlee.

Ha-Ree had, however, something none of his ancestors had. Modern technology, such as there is in far off Duchies, had provided him with a glass which magnifies. And although his father had been satisfied with fashioning this means of magnification to his work as a jeweler, young Ha-Ree, proving to be a clever fellow in his own right, had managed to fashion a crude tube with two lenses similar to what we now know as a telescope. With this device, Ha-Ree felt he had an advantage. He didn't know what that advantage was yet, but he felt this

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secret device would help him to win the heart of the fair Je-Nee, Princess of Vlee.

Winning the heart of a Princess, as we all know, is no easy matter. None of Ha-Ree's brothers, uncles, grandfathers, nor great-grandfathers had ever been able to do that. While it is true that over the centuries only a handful (literally, five) had ever really thought seriously about such a proposition, and fewer still (two or three, the legends are unclear about this) ever made any attempt at heart-winning at the Princess level, Ha-Ree nonetheless felt, in his heavily smitten heart, that it was possible.

Ha-Ree, it should be noted, was a very determined young man.

He had graduated with honor from Vlee Tech, had captained the varsity Ulerich, and delivered a graduation address on the properties and social significance of precious metals and semi-precious gems.

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One bright morning in the Year of the Clown (about mid-Freja, I should think), after Princess Je-Nee and Ha-Ree had completed their studies, there came a disturbance from high on the B'taral. No one was able to determine the exact source of the noise, it being so brief and unexpected, but nods had it that it could be none other than Toe-Nee.

"Yep," the villagers nodded to each other, "it must be Toe-Nee."

That's all there is up there, they thought, so it must be so. But among the youth of the village, there was a growing knot of inquiring minds, and one of the most inquiring of those minds belonged to Ha-Ree.

"Why so?" he asked. "Just because it's logical, probable, and properly directional, it shouldn't be assumed to be so."

"Oh privvy on your thoughts, young jeweler," his neighbor said. "It had to be Toe-Nee. Accept it and get about your business."

But youth (and this is supported in the legends) has energy that must be channeled and spent. And it is the wise parent that provides guidance, however subtle, for this energy to be used beneficially. Ha-Ree's father, Ha-Rold, recognized this spark of restless energy in his son and decided to speak to him.

Ha-Rold went to his son's chamber that evening after the meal. Ha-Ree, in many respects, was a typical young man and his chamber

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was sprinkled lightly with the odd collection of things boys of his age and time accumulated. Ha-Rold stepped over a discarded flagon of mint-ade, moved a pair of dirty Ulerich shorts from the chair, and turned the chair to deliberately face away from the rubbings on the wall. The rubbings, from the official stone carvings of the Duke and Duchess at the castle at Wah, had been delicately (if slightly distastefully) altered by one of Ha-Ree's friends.

"Why do you question so?" Ha-Rold asked his son. "What drives you to this state of inquiry? Tell me, so I can know why it is so. When we both know, it will be easier for you to say so, and then your brother will know also, and we can tell your sisters so they will be put at ease."

Ha-Ree knew that his father was a champion of inner peace and harmony. It was well known throughout Wah-Vlee-Dah that the jeweler of Vlee could be counted upon to contribute his un-tiring patience, wisdom, and gift of negotiation to any conflict, no matter what size. Thus, knowing he was in the presence of a master, and exhibiting maturity well beyond what even his closest friends would have thought him capable of, Ha-Ree pushed aside the tangle of Ulerich slings on the foot of his bed and searched his father's loving face.

"I have no answer for you," he said. "I am troubled, to be sure. And the causes are probably as complicated as they are meaningless. Tell me why this is so, father, and give me a sign."

"You are no different than I was at your age," Ha-Rold confided. "In the Year of the Leaf I ran away to Dah, yes, to Dah. There was a camp down by the racetrack -- five miles long -- oh, to Dah that day. I tried to run all night, and tried to run all day, but I lost my money through a hole in my bag and had to bed down by the bay."

Ha-Rold gripped his son's shoulder. "Perhaps you need this, too, Ha-Ree. Perhaps it is your time to run."



The next morning, just as bright and cheerful as the one before, was also blasted by the disturbance. This time it lasted several seconds and sounded less like the sharp CRACK of yesterday, and more like a yell -- a thunderous and somewhat high-pitched yell as though a dragon

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were trying to get the immediate attention of a caravan it had just missed and the next one wasn't expected through until October. (It should be noted, however, that there was no evidence of dragons ever traveling by caravan when flying was ever so much more convenient.)

But the disturbance lasted long enough for the villagers to confirm among themselves that, indeed it was the dragon -- their nods being more curt, and their attitudes more confident.

"Sure was," their nods seemed to say.

"Sure is so. Told you so."

And in mid-afternoon the disturbance came again -- a blast just as loud and even louder. Ha-Ree echoed the thoughts of the entire village that evening at mealtime when he said, "Toe-Nee must have a problem."

"He certainly has," said his mother, "and a very loud one." Ha-Ree's mother was never one to pull any punches.

There was quiet all that night, though many villagers slept fitfully, wondering when Toe-Nee's problem would blast them again. Fortunately, the next blast didn't come until close to the middle of the following day.

In late morning on that Third Day of the Disturbance, Ha-Ree happened to be on an errand which took him from the jeweler's shop into the middle of town near the fountain at the foot of Duke Street, which, of course, led straight to the Palace where Je-Nee lived. But then, it should be noted, almost every errand that Ha-Ree ran took him somewhere close to the Palace, so smitten was he by Princess Je-Nee.

On this day, however, Ha-Ree was in luck! As he approached the fountain he saw the gathered villagers gawking toward the Palace, and he ran forward to join them in the hope that fair Je-Nee soon would be there. The children all jostled and shrugged in their threads, while visions of royalty danced in their heads.

As the Royal Coach came into view, Ha-Ree strained to get closer or higher, but the throng had grown so large and the tangle of arms and bodies pressed so tightly that Ha-Ree imagined the briar thicket surrounding Sleeping Beauty's castle couldn't have been more formidable than this. But just when he thought he would miss the chance for a peek, one young boy lost his foothold on the top of the fountain and slipped, hardly noticed, into the clear mountain spring

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water. Ha-Ree seized his chance and dashed madly to the wet stones, leaped onto the centerpiece and clambered to the top. As the young boy sputtered beneath him, Ha-Ree's feet found the beaks of two sculpted eagles and he was surprised to see that the Royal Coach had stopped -- and it was right in front of the fountain!

One of the footmen stepped from the Coach and moved toward the fountain with a silver pitcher. Ha-Ree was in awe, as were the rest of the throng, so he leaned out as far as he could and craned his neck just a little to the left. He could just but almost make out who was in the Coach. Another few inches and...

(Did you guess what happened? I did when it was told to me. But I certainly didn't know all the details, just as you don't. So, here they are.)

Just as Ha-Ree caught sight of Princess Je-Nee, he also lost his grip on the fountain. And just as his fingers slipped from the smooth stone, Toe-Nee blasted the village with another Disturbance. And just as the deafening sound reached the fountain, the footman was dipping the pitcher into the water. And just as the first drops touched the rim, Princess Je-Nee leaned forward in the coach to see the person on top of the fountain. And just as she recognized him as the son of the wise jeweler, well, you can imagine the delirium that followed.

"Ah," thought Ha-Ree, and then "Ooops!"

"Blaaah!" went Toe-Nee, then the footman, "Oh my!"

"It's him," thought Je-Nee and she smiled to herself,
And only she and her sister knew why.

That was all in the first two seconds. The second two seconds went something like this (but here the legend is cloudy):

SPALOOSH! went Ha-Ree.

"Blaaah!" continued Toe-Nee.

"What's this?!" cried the footman,
And "Oh Dear!" said Je-Nee.

The third two seconds were even more pitiful, for no words or utterances at all could be heard -- just the gentle lapping of the water in the fountain. For in this, the third two seconds of The Incident, on the Third Day of the Disturbance, Ha-Ree emerged from the water with his drenched hair like a babushka around his face, his eyes tightly closed

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against the cold spring water, and the silver pitcher caught between his teeth like the nose and tusks of a boar!

Such a quiet was heretofore only ever imagined in Vlee.

The fourth two seconds? Well these were far and away louder than the second two seconds, even without Toe-Nee's "Blaaah!" There was some shouting, to be sure, and some squealing from the youngsters who couldn't see, and maybe a curse caused by a crushed foot or two, but certainly the most distinguishable sound was that of a great laughter. And the sight of Ha-Ree, like a dog/boar chest deep in the water with the Princess's silver pitcher on his face, was indelibly etched in the collective memory of the village. In the years to come, people who were probably not even born yet, would swear they remembered that day, even though its significance was yet to be realized.

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Inside the Coach, Princess Je-Nee and her sister, Em-Lee, broke out in what must be described, for want of a better phrase, as a case of the red-faced, breath-holding, don't-dare-to-be-caught-laughing sniggles. Fortunately, by the Year of the Clown, beautifully scenic and edged-in-lace fans had been invented, and the two sniggling sisters had been able to pop their fans open before the townspeople had thought to look and see what effect the spectacle had on the Royalty. They also had effectively covered their faces by the time the last of the fountain water dripped from Ha-Ree's eyes and he could blink them open. (Chances are that he would have been too pre-occupied with the silver pitcher attached to his face to notice the Princesses, but one never knows the observational powers of one who is smitten...)

Princess Je-Nee, meanwhile, was red-faced because she had recognized Ha-Ree, and she, as only her sister knew, had been in a terrible state of smitten-ness herself ever since last Midwinter at the Ulerich championships. It was then that her heart was enfeebled through the heroism displayed by the captain of the varsity Ulerich as his team, the Vlee "Dragons," went down to defeat at the hands and slings of the Dah "Dockers." It could have been pity, I suppose, in someone less sensitive, but the sight of Ha-Ree, muddied and torn, battered and bleeding, slogging his way down the field to sling yet another Ulerich toward the "Dockers" goal was a study in

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determination, loyalty, courage, and strength. She would never forget him, this Ha-Ree, son of Ha-Rold the wise jeweler, varsity captain courageous, and handsome even though covered with grime and defeat.

"I must meet him," Je-Nee had whispered to her sister. Em-Lee had said nothing, for she knew it was highly unlikely that such a meeting would ever come to be. In the time of Freja, social classes rarely mingled, and it would take some very unusual circumstances for these two unknowingly cross-smitten hearts to cross paths in the real world.

To be sure, their eyes met and their hands touched thousands of times in their separate daydreams, but as you may know, very few daydreams ever become reality. Ha-Ree and Je-Nee knew this, but even so, to live is to dream and a dream of pure love is more precious than pure gold.

So Princess Je-Nee dreamed of the day when she would meet Ha-Ree. Today, however, was not the day.

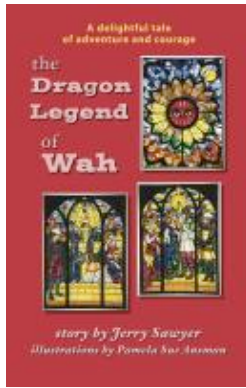


You were right, Ha-Ree had been pre-occupied with the silver pitcher. He had glimpsed Princess Je-Nee, and he knew enough about human nature that this was one of those situations where you do NOT want to call attention to yourself. In fact, he was having trouble balancing his emotions between a feeling of complete and utter embarrassment/humiliation, and a feeling of complete and indefinable joy at being so close to the fair Je-Nee at last. But his sense of propriety won, and he knew that if he were ever to meet the Princess, it could not be as a drenched dog, and so he fought the intense desire to gaze at her. And, as the silver pitcher was wrenched from his jowls by the footman, he dropped his head and looked into the darkness of the water in the shadow of the fountain. He saw no reflection, but only the swirling dimness that was his heart.

Ha-Ree remembered nothing of the next few minutes, but the butcher told him later that after the footman clattered indignantly back to the Coach and the Royalty clippity-ed on through the crowd of laughing citizens, Ha-Ree stared numbly after the procession. Then, he dripped silently on the edge of the fountain before backslapping neighbors jostled him back into the liveliness and humor of the

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moment. But though smiling and seemingly good-natured, Ha-Ree regretted, most deeply, that this moment had ever happened. And Ha-Ree sulked home. And Ha-Ree sulked -- boy, did he sulk! It was the first recorded episode of emotional GLOOM and DOOM, according to the legends, and so, of course, it must have been so. Or so they say.



In the Year of the Clown, in a land with two moons, Je-Free sets out to tame the dragon, but more importantly, his brave task must help him with the heart of the Princess of Vlee. He is aided by little brother Je-Free, who must make sure the Princess knows the name of the hero -- in case he never returns. This enchanting tale combines adventure, humor, and family values for all ages.

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