



## The Rivers of Zadaa (Pendragon Book 6)

By D.J. MacHale

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The battle continues. The struggle of good versus evil continues as Bobby Pendragon follows Saint Dane to the territory of Zadaa. Saint Dane's influence has fueled the fire of discontent between two warring tribes: the Rokador and the Batu. This is also the territory where the Traveler Loor lives as a member of the Batu. Together she and Bobby must work to thwart Saint Dane's efforts to destroy Zadaa.

But as Bobby pursues Saint Dane, he begins to notice changes in himself. He is no longer a flip kid looking for excitement. He is a young man beginning to see this quest as more than a series of adventures. He is also learning that as a Traveler, he has powers no normal human should have.

In this latest installment of Bobby Pendragon's battle to save humanity, discovery and danger go hand in hand as D. J. MacHale takes readers on an emotional thrill ride they won't soon forget..

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## **The Rivers of Zadaa (Pendragon Book 6) By D.J. MacHale Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #156992 in eBooks
- Published on: 2005-07-01
- Released on: 2005-07-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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## **Editorial Review**

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8 -Bobby Pendragon plunges once more into his fast-moving, rip-roaring, and basically pointless story in this sixth volume in the series. Here he and his ally, the beautiful, athletic teen-warrior Loor, team up to save Loor's home world of Zadaa from the despicable shape-changing demon Saint Dane. The villain has hatched a plot to cut off all the water from Loor's people, instigating a civil war between the thirsty Batu and the underground Rokador, with whom the Batu have until now kept an uneasy truce. The plot is about as deep as a cookie sheet, and the characterizations are even shallower-except for Pendragon, who grows as a character when he decides that he must learn to fight, and he asks Loor to teach him. Meanwhile, Saint Dane also bedevils Bobby's friends Mark and Courtney back home in Stony Brook, CT. This series treads water throughout most of its volumes; when readers reach the end of this episode, they're only microscopically farther along in the story arc than when they began. Still, the action never stops for long, and *Zadaa* is sure to hold the interest of fans of the series.-*Walter Minkel, New York Public Library*

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### **About the Author**

D. J. MacHale is a writer, director, and producer of several popular television series and movies that include Flight 29 Down; Are You Afraid of the Dark?; Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective; Tower of Terror; and Ghostwriter. Pendragon, his first book series, is a #1 New York Times bestselling series. He lives in southern California with his wife, Evangeline; his daughter, Keaton; a golden retriever, Maggie; and a kitten, Kaboodle.

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## **Chapter One: Journal #20**

Zadaa

It began with a battle.

A nasty one. Then again, is there such a thing as a nice battle? I guess this one seemed especially vicious because it was over something so trivial. At least that's what I thought at the time. At stake was a couple gallons of water. I'm serious. Regular old everyday water. Not exactly the kind of thing you'd expect a group of professional warriors to fight to the death over, but that's not the way it works here on the territory of Zadaa. Water here is more valuable than food, more valuable than treasure. It's even more valuable than life. I know. I've seen people risk theirs to get a few precious drops.

How messed up is that?

Mark, Courtney, it's been a while since I've written a journal to you guys, and for that I apologize. I think after I tell you all that's happened since my last journal, you'll understand why. From the time I arrived here on Zadaa, I haven't had much time to think, let alone kick back and write. I'm doing it now because I'm about to set out on an adventure that was long in coming. I've tried to avoid it, but now I have no choice. Starting tomorrow, life is going to be very different for me. I feel as if I'm closing the first chapter on my life as a Traveler and beginning a new and more dangerous one. I know, that doesn't seem possible, but it's the truth. Before I tell you about it, I need to let you know what happened since I landed back on Zadaa. You'll need to hear it all to understand why I've chosen the path I'm about to take. Maybe writing it down will help me

understand it a little better myself.

You won't be surprised to hear that Saint Dane is here. I've already run into him. It wasn't pretty. But more about that later. I also have a good idea of what the turning point is here on Zadaa. I think it has something to do with water...or the lack of it. I've no doubt that Saint Dane's evil plan for this territory is somehow tied in to the water trouble they're having. Bottom line is, our quest to stop Saint Dane's plan to crush all of Halla has come to Zadaa. This is our next challenge. And so we go.

I first want to tell you about the battle that happened soon after I arrived. It's important to hear because in many ways it's a small example of the bigger trouble I found on this territory. That, and because one of the warriors involved in the fight was my friend. Loor. The Traveler from Zadaa.

"Keep to yourself, Pendragon," Loor ordered as we strode along the dusty street of Xhaxhu. "Stay in the shadows. Do not look anyone in the eye. It is dangerous for a Rokador to be seen in the city."

"But I'm not a Rokador," I complained.

"Do not argue," Loor said sharply. "Do as I say."

I didn't argue. I knew what she meant. There were two tribes living in this area of Zadaa. The Batu lived above ground in the cities. They were a dark-skinned race, made so because they lived for generations under the hot, desert sun. Loor was a Batu. The other tribe was the Rokador. They lived underground in a labyrinth of tunnels that spread throughout Zadaa. They weren't moles or anything; they were definitely civilized. But as you might guess, living underground didn't do much for their tans. The Rokador were a light-skinned race. So with my white skin and light brown hair, I pretty much looked like a Rokador. And since there was some serious bad blood between the Batu and the Rokador, making myself invisible up here on the surface was a smart idea. To that end, Loor had me wearing heavy, dark clothing that covered my head and arms. It was great for a disguise, not so great for keeping cool. I'm guesstimating that the temperature in Xhaxhu averages about ninety degrees. On a cool day. So I was sweating like a fiend. Or at least a fiend in a sauna wearing a winter coat.

"Can't somebody take your place?" I asked. "I mean, we have more important things to worry about."

Loor looked straight ahead as she strode along. Her jaw set. I'd seen this look before. She had her game face on. I know you guys can picture her. She's hard to forget. I'd grown a few inches since I first met her on Denduron, but she still had me by a solid two inches. Her once almost-waist-length black hair was a bit shorter now, falling to her shoulders. I guess the long hair got in the way when she did her training. As you know, Loor is a warrior. Here on Zadaa they call the warrior class "Ghee." When I first met Loor, she was a warrior-in-training. Since then, she has been elevated to full-fledged warrior status. I'm guessing she was at the head of her class. She's that good. She even looks the part. This girl is totally cut. I'm talking stupid-low body fat. It isn't hard to see this since her lightweight leather armor reveals a lot of skin. Wearing heavy metal armor like the knights of the Round Table wouldn't fly here on searing-hot Zadaa. You'd end up cooking like Spam in the can. Assuming Spam is actually cooked, which I'm not so sure about. But whatever. You get the idea. The warriors here had to be protected, but cool. Unlike me, who had to be wearing a wool-freakin'-blanket.

The muscles in her long arms and legs flexed as she moved down the street, making her look even more formidable. I guess when you're a professional warrior, having an awesome athletic body goes with the territory. So to speak.

"I have no choice but to fight today," Loor finally answered. "I am next in the rotation."

"Rotation?" I snapped. "What are you, a baseball pitcher? Have them change the schedule. Find a relief pitcher. If something happens to you then -- "

"If I do not fight," Loor interrupted, "the Ghee commanders will mark me as a coward and banish me to a labor colony in the desert. Or I could get lucky and they would execute me."

"Oh," I said soberly. "Not a whole lot of great choices here."

"Do not worry, Pendragon," she said, finally looking at me. "Our destiny is to stop Saint Dane. I will not let anything stand in our way."

I believed her, but that didn't mean I wasn't going to worry.

"Loor!" came a voice from behind us. Running to catch up was Saangi. I'm not exactly sure what her official title is, but I guess on Second Earth you would call her Loor's squire. You know, one of those young servants who are assigned to knights to take care of their every need. The Ghee warriors of Zadaa operated pretty much like the knights of old, without the Spam-can suits.

"You forgot this!" Saangi said, out of breath. She handed Loor a small, leather container that was about the size of a canteen. In fact that's exactly what it was, a canteen full of water.

"No," Loor said sternly. "I cannot use this."

"But you will need water if the battle is difficult -- , " Saangi protested.

"Take it back to my home," Loor said firmly. "And do not let anyone see you with it."

When Loor spoke in that serious tone, you didn't mess with her. At least I didn't. I figured Saangi knew better too. The girl's shoulders fell in disappointment. I'm guessing she was around fourteen, only a few years younger than me. She had the dark skin of the Batu, but unlike Loor, her hair was cut tight to her head, like a guy. She wore simple, dark clothes that looked sort of like Loor's, but they were made of cloth rather than leather. Someday she would wear the armor of a Ghee warrior, but until then, her job was to take care of Loor.

Oh yeah, one other thing. Saangi had another job. She was Loor's acolyte. She knew all about the Travelers and our mission to stop Saint Dane. I thought Saangi was kind of young to have that kind of responsibility, but then again, I was only fourteen when I became a Traveler. Still, Saangi seemed more like an eager kid than a future warrior who could help us defeat a world-crushing demon. But that's just me.

"Do not be upset, Saangi," Loor said, taking the edge off her voice. "You were concerned about me and for that I am grateful. But it would not look right for me to be quenching my thirst during a fight over water."

Saangi nodded. "I understand," she said. "But do not begin the battle until I get there!" She turned and ran back the way she had come.

"She is so young," Loor said as we watched her run away. "I wish she did not have to know of the danger we are all in."

"Hey, you and I aren't exactly ancient," I said. "I'd just as soon not know so much either."

Loor gave me a quick look, and continued walking.

"So what exactly is the point of this fight?" I asked, hurrying to keep up.

"It is a contest," Loor answered. "You have seen how precious water is in the city. The situation has become so desperate, it has turned us against one another."

"You mean the Batu against the Rokador?"

"It is worse than that," she answered. "Since the underground rivers have gone dry, the Batu are fighting among themselves in their quest for water. Families guard their small supplies fiercely. It is not uncommon for neighbors to battle one another over a small puddle after a rain shower."

One look around confirmed what Loor was saying. When I first saw Xhaxhu, the city was an amazing, fertile oasis in the middle of the desert. Troughs of fresh, clean water ran along the streets. There were rich palm trees, colorful hanging gardens and even fountains that sprayed water in intricate patterns around the massive statues of stone. But now, the city was dry. Bone dry. The troughs were empty, except for dust. The gardens were gone. The palm trees were dying. Sand from the desert blew through the streets and collected in every corner. Walking through Xhaxhu, I couldn't help but imagine that this is what the cities of ancient Egypt must have looked like when the desert began taking over. Unless something changed, I could imagine the city of Xhaxhu one day being buried in sand, waiting for some future civilization to uncover it.

Loor continued, "It has caused a divide among the Ghee warriors. Half of us remain loyal to our mission. We protect Xhaxhu and the royal family of Zinj."

"And the other half?" I asked.

"They have the same goal, but differ in their methods. The royal family has made it..."

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