

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

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Part III Installment eleven: Rainbow Principle 3, Yellow

"Yearn to Learn (about ourselves, others and the big questions about life & death)"

We affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

Our story thus far ...

Two normal children, Jared and Delia, are magically chosen to go on a quest to discover seven different dragons in order to bring peace to the world. Their guide is a furry little creature with big ears and a potbelly named Les. As part of the third task, they've traveled to a remote, barren island in search of the lost kingdom of Atlantis, first stopping in Alexandria and acquiring another traveling companion: a library clerk named Polly.

All together, the travelers hiked down a long sea cave to the edge of a vast, underground lake. With the help of a sea turtle, Jared has crossed the lake, and the turtle then continued on and spoke to the Yellow Dragon, who insisted that all three children come to see her. Only Polly doesn't know how to swim and is afraid to cross the lake.

Our story continues ...

"No! I won't do it. I never should have left Alexandria. I hate this place. I hate the damp and the cold and that icky green light. I miss my books. I miss my family. I don't want to meet a dragon. I WANT TO GO HOME!" "Hmm," said Les. "This is a snag I hadn't expected. Give me a sec, kids." With that, he vanished, again. Delia and Jared were used to his sudden disappearances, but Polly wasn't, and she looked more frightened than ever.

They sat for a time, waiting for Les. But Les didn't reappear. Instead, the children heard the turtle say, "An honor for a humble turtle!" and bow its head down lower to the ground. Delia turned around and her jaw dropped. Out of the water rose a gigantic turtle, big as a house. "Grandfather," said the little sea turtle reverently.

The giant turtle didn't say a word. It merely sat still, looking at Delia, Jared, and Polly with unusual, luminescent eyes.

The smaller turtle said, "He wants you to climb on his back. He will carry you. I will come, too, to show the way and to speak for him. He is too ancient to speak human." Delia and Jared practically dragged Polly up to the turtle's shell, but once she had touched it, her fears began to ease, and she climbed the giant shell nimbly, arriving at the top before

either of the other children. The journey flashed by. The great grandfather turtle was able to keep them high above the water. Warmth radiated through his shell, giving all three of them a happy glow.

When they arrived at the far shore, they glided effortlessly down the river and coasted to a stop within sight of a vast city carved of glistening white limestone, all of it covered in lichen and glowing pale green. They climbed down from the giant turtle's shell, and he closed his eyes and fell asleep. The smaller sea turtle, however, crawled out of the water to proceed with them. They made their way slowly toward the towering buildings.

Suddenly, a tremendous voice echoed through the immense cavern. "*WHO GOES THERE?*" "Zheltizna, it's me again, but I brought them all this time," said the turtle.

"Oh," said the dragon in a more normal voice. They heard the flapping of wings and a tiny creature about the size of a bat flew down toward them. Just before she arrived, she transformed into human shape. She looked like a librarian. She wore round glasses on a chain around her neck, plain clothes with a slightly worn cardigan sweater, and sensible shoes.

"Which one of you is the librarian?" "I ... I was a clerk in the library of Alexandria," stammered Polly. "Are ... are you going to eat us?" "Eat you? Yuck. Humans are too stringy, and you look like you'd taste especially dusty.

No, I want to hire you. Thank you, turtle, for bringing her to me." The turtle nodded and said, "I will wait with the Grandfather," and slowly began to make his way back to the water.

Meanwhile, the dragon-librarian took hold of Polly's arm, turned on her heel and marched off toward one of the bigger buildings. At the entrance, she stopped abruptly.

"YOU and YOU!" she shouted pointing at Jared and Delia. "Why are you still here? You are not librarians. You can go now." "Please, ma'am," said Jared. "I'm afraid we're on a quest. We can't go until we have..." (he paused here for a minute, remembering the exact phrasing) "... asked you the question that sets your heart free." "Hmph," said Zheltizna. "I have no time for such foolishness. This girl and I, we have work to do. You two run and play." "No, thank you," said Delia. "We'd rather see the library. Do you mind if we search? We promise to put everything back where we found it.

Zheltizna glared at them over her glasses. "You make no noise. You make no mess.

You do not interfere in our work. Understand?" "Understood," said Jared and Delia together.

"Can you just tell us where the prophecy section is?" asked Jared politely, but the Yellow Dragon ignored his request, motioning imperiously to Polly and striding off into the stacks. With an apologetic shrug, Polly hurried after her.

So it was that while Polly helped the Yellow Dragon keep the library organized, Jared and Delia searched the library for books about prophecies, dragons, and hope. They read until their eyes were bleary, and fell asleep with their noses still in the books, but they didn't find any clues.

However, some powerful magic was at work, because when they felt hungry, food would magically appear. When they got tired, they'd happen upon comfy couches with blankets tossed over the side. When they needed a bathroom, they only had to walk a little ways, and a sign would appear pointing the way.

Nonetheless, after many days of fruitless searching, they were losing hope. "Jared," said Delia, "I'm stumped. How can we possibly guess what question might set Zheltizna's heart free! She won't even talk to us." Jared chewed on his lower lip for a moment, and then spoke. "She talks to Polly! And Polly talks to us. Maybe Polly can help us with this quest." "It's worth a try," agreed Delia.

So they set off in search of Polly and the dragon. They walked up and down aisles, climbed up and down staircases, and searched all the nooks and crannies they came across. Sometimes they would see Polly and Zheltizna in the distance, but mindful of the dragon's instructions, they were afraid to call out.

Eventually, however, Jared threw caution to the wind and hollered out "HEY POLLY!" the next time he saw her in the distance. Polly turned and began to hurry toward them, a smile on her face. Behind her, the frumpy librarian was changing into a giant, yellow, fanged snake! Zheltizna's voice boomed out, "HOW DARE YOU DISTURB OUR WORK! NO TALKING IN THE LIBRARY!"

Jared and Delia were terrified, but Polly, who had been so frightened of the water, was in her element here in the library. She simply turned around, put her hands on her hips, and said, "That's enough, Zheltizna. These are my friends, and I'm going to talk to them. And if you don't stop acting like a bully, I won't help you with your books anymore."

Zheltizna immediately transformed back into her human shape, but looked unhappy about the delay. Polly hugged Delia and Jared warmly, and asked if they were all right. They reassured her, and then made their request: "Polly, can you help us talk to Zheltizna?" Zheltizna, who had been doing her best to ignore them all, perked up her ears. "Polly! Leave those children! We must get back to work now." She grabbed onto Polly's wrist and began to drag her away.

Polly called back to them over her shoulder. "William Congreve! *The Mourning Bride!* It's a play - in the drama section. I'll see you again soon!" Jared stood there looking puzzled. Delia, meanwhile, quickly wrote down what Polly had said. "Well," she said. "Shall we go find it?" The play was fairly obscure, but written in English at least. They took turns reading it aloud to each other. It was about half way through that they came upon a line that made them both look up, excited: "Music has charms to sooth a savage breast, to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak." "That's it!" exclaimed Delia. "Jared, do you still have that flute that Marita gave you?" "I sure do." Jared got the flute out and began to play, first scales and then a little melody.

Delia recognized the song and began to sing - her high, clear voice complementing the pure tones of the little flute.

Toward the end of the song, Polly and the dragon came around the corner. Jared kept playing, and when the song came to an end, he launched straight into another. When he'd finished the second song, he lay down the little flute and smiled at the dragon.

"How are you?" Delia asked her.

Amazed, they watched the dragon's eyes fill with tears. "Lonely," she answered simply.

"Will you tell us why? What happened in this place?" continued Delia.

"I suppose," sighed the dragon.

"Once, this was a busy city, filled with learned, caring people. I hovered over it all, helping people learn, helping people grown, helping people find the answers they needed to make good decisions.

"Then, one day, a young man asked a question for which I could find no answer - 'Why is there suffering in the world?' I could find no help in any of the religious books, nor the novels, nor the histories. More and more, this question became my obsession. I focused all my time and energy on answering it - building this library all in hopes of either answering the question or somehow bringing an end to suffering.

"But while I labored and searched for answers, the people in the city started debating.

One group said that suffering existed to punish people for doing bad things. Another said that the purpose of suffering was to strengthen and test people, to help them grow.

Another said that suffering had no meaning, and that it ought to be possible to eliminate suffering altogether.

"The groups became more and more hostile to each other. The group that believed suffering served as punishment decided that the other groups needed to be punished, and so they attacked, and a war started. Soon everyone was killing everyone. When I came out of my library, ready to tell the people that this question *had* no answer, I was horrified. I knew it had to stop, so I used my magic to make the people invisible and silent, so that they couldn't argue anymore.

"Then, full of sadness, I swallowed the city and brought it here, under the earth. I read and catalogue every book ever written, and I keep hoping that once I finds the answer I can safely bring my people back.

"Do you see, now, why I am so busy? Do you see why my work is so important?" "Yes, I do," said Delia sympathetically, and she reached out to touch the dragon. But Zheltizna drew back, startled, and the more familiar, cranky look came over her face again.

"And you have wasted my time, again. Polly, come," she said.

"Oh wait, wait, wait. I need to give you my token. I know I've got it around here somewhere." She rummaged around in her sweater pockets and pulled out a crystal prism, which she held out to Jared, and then she turned and bustled off into the stacks once again.

Dragon Task: Talk about your answers to some questions that don't have one right answer.