

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

### PART VII - Installment 25: Rainbow Principle **Violet**

"The color violet reminds us to value the relationship we have with the earth and all living things "

*We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

*Our story thus far ...*

Jared and Delia are nearing the end of their quest. They have met and befriended six of the seven "Rainbow Dragons" described in an ancient prophecy that promises to bring peace and prosperity to the war torn world. Now, they are on their way to meet Bagranka, the Violet Dragon, who lives deep in the wildest and most rugged wilderness territory on earth.

*Our story continues...*

Lazyurov, the Indigo Dragon, glided down and landed on a high, rocky outcropping, surrounded entirely by dense, lush forest. His massive body occupied the entire ledge, and he huddled awkwardly, unable to move much without getting his wings or his long tail tangled in the undergrowth.

"CHILDREN," he boomed, "YOU MUST CONTINUE ON FOOT. MY SISTER, THE VIOLET DRAGON, LIVES IN A CAVE ONLY A FEW MILES FROM HERE. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS ROUGH GOING. IT MAY TAKE YOU A FEW DAYS."

"A few days?!?!" said Jared, shocked. "We're used to walking, Lazyurov. We can cover twenty miles in a day."

"NOT IN THIS WILD TERRITORY, MY FRIENDS. KEEP YOUR BEARINGS, PACE YOURSELVES, AND BE CAREFUL! MANY DANGEROUS CREATURES PROWL THE JUNGLE, AND MY SISTER IS THE MOST DANGEROUS OF ALL. DON'T BE AFRAID TO TURN BACK WHEN THE WAY IS BLOCKED. YOU WILL FIND HER, EVENTUALLY. FAREWELL!"

The great Indigo Dragon launched himself into the air and quickly flew out of sight. Jared and Delia soon discovered just why jungle walking took so long. The undergrowth was so thick that in some places they had to use Jared's practice sword to hack a path for themselves. It was hard, sweaty work, and even taking turns, they tired rapidly. The sword needed to be sharpened every hour or so with a whetstone, and as they detoured around boulders, large trees, and other obstacles, they had to keep a close eye on the compass to avoid getting turned around. Even so, they frequently found themselves at dead ends - cliffs too steep to climb, rivers too deep and swift to cross. At the end of the day, they hadn't made much forward progress.

When darkness fell, they remembered Lazyurov's words of warning about the dangerous creatures in the jungle and went back to the ledge and built a small fire - to keep warm and to keep the beasties away. They agreed to take turns sleeping. Jared stood watch first while Delia slept. When he couldn't stay

awake any longer, he woke his friend, and this way, on the uncomfortable, rocky ledge, they passed a restless night.

And so it went for three days: long, hard days with little progress followed by restless, uncomfortable nights back on the rocky ledge. At this point, they were getting worried about their dwindling supplies. They were almost out of water as well as food. There was no sign of Bangranka or her cave.

"Do you think we could call on one of the dragons for help? Maybe one of them could fly us out of here for a couple of days so that we could rest and get more food and water," said Delia when, at about noon, they came to yet another dead end. Wiping the sweat off of his face, Jared shook his head. "We're running out of time, Delia. Remember, the prophecy said we needed to finish the quest in one year's time. Well, the anniversary of the day I first touched the pearl is the day after tomorrow. We've got to keep going, and hopefully, we'll find Bangranka's lair in time."

"Les would have known what to do," said Delia disgustedly. "He'd know a way to get through this jungle that didn't involve hacking our way through."

"Well, Les isn't here, but I'm open to any suggestions!" snapped Jared.

Then Delia shrieked as she sighted a huge spider, the size of her fist, descend from the canopy above and land on Jared's shoulder. "A spider! A spider! Kill it, Jared!" She backed away from him, her eyes wide with fear and disgust.

"Why would you want to do that?" the spider asked. "I thought you said you needed some help. I *can* help you, and I'm even *willing* to help you. You'd be crazy to squish me."

Jared, who had already raised his hand in preparation to sweep the spider off of him, stopped cold. "Excuse me? Delia, did this spider just talk? Or am I delirious?"

"No," said Delia. "I heard it too."

"Of course you heard it," said the spider. "What's the matter with you two? Haven't you ever met a spider who speaks English before?"

"I've never met a spider who speaks anything!" said Jared.

"That's complete rubbish," said the spider. "There's not a spider on this planet who doesn't speak arachnid - though come to think of it, I have met some in my travels whose accents are pretty thick."

"Sp-spiders have a language?" said Delia.

"Of course we do. All animals and plants do. Is it our fault that you humans don't want to listen anymore? No, it's not. Not our fault at all. But laying blame doesn't do us any good. That's why I went to the trouble of learning human - English, specifically. I thought it might come in handy at some point, and here we are. You need a guide, I know my way around the jungle, and I know where the Violet Dragon lives. I did overhear you saying that's where you are going, yes?"

"Yes," said Jared. "I ... what do you mean, all plants and animals have a language?"

"All animals and plants have a language, and we grow up knowing our own, and usually the language of a couple of other species that are close to us. It was one of the great tragedies on the planet, boy, when your species, the humans, stopped listening to the rest of us about a hundred thousand years ago. Because you don't listen, you do a lot of damage, and because you don't speak any language but your own, you don't even bother to apologize when you do damage. Which we all do sometimes, you know. We all have to eat, which means killing or at least damaging whatever we are going to eat. That's the way it works. But most of us, apart from humans, have the manners to apologize. Which brings me to my next point.

"I will help you find your way to the Violet Dragon, but first you have to apologize to the plants you hacked apart these past couple of days."

Jared and Delia stood stunned for a moment, letting it all sink in. Finally, Delia shook her head as if to clear it and asked "How? As you've already noticed, we don't speak any language but our own. How do we apologize to plants?"

"Well, you learn to speak plant, of course!" the spider snorted. "Now - close your eyes." Jared and Delia did so. "First, you need to listen. Pay attention to your own breath - in, and out. In, and out. Then listen for its counterpoint - for the out and in breath that is like an echo, answering your out breath with its in breath, and vice versa."

Jared and Delia did as the spider instructed, and sure enough, after a while, they began to hear the counterpoint to their breathing. "I hear it!" said Delia excitedly.

"Good!" said the spider. "How about you, Jared?"

"I ... I think so ..." he said, concentrating hard.

"Okay. You can hear the plants breathing. That's the first step. Now, if you pay close attention, you'll notice a sort of stretching sound in you. It's very, very quiet - more of a feeling, really, than a sound. It's the sound of your body growing. Can you hear it?"

The children concentrated, really hard, and sure enough, they heard their own bodies growing, kind of like a silent, slow swooshing noise. When they nodded their head, the spider continued.

"Okay. Now listen for that same noise in the plants around you. KEEP YOUR EYES CLOSED!" He barked, for Delia had opened her eyes to peek. They listened, hard, and sure enough, they began to have a sense of the jungle around them as a vast and dense tangle of living things, breathing and growing, sucking nutrients up from the earth, drinking in sunlight from above, stretching, always, to reach new places.

With their awareness tuned to the language of the plants, the damage they had done cutting a path became very clear to them. In their mind's eye, each severed branch or vine emitted a tiny cry of pain and loss. Delia's breath caught in her throat, and Jared, sensing her distress, reached out and took her hand.

"Good," said the spider. "You can hear them. Now you have to apologize. Go on, then, I'll wait here."

And so the two children walked, hand in hand, back along the path they had cut, stopping frequently, gently touching each plant they had damaged, offering, in the same silent, swooshing way, an apology for causing harm. The plants, amazingly, seemed to respond with forgiveness. Wise in the way of growing things, they understood that sometimes, being cut or eaten was a necessary part of sharing the earth, a necessary part of life. They reassured the children that all plants had the capacity to heal, and that they would continue to grow in new directions.

By the time Delia and Jared returned to the end of the path where the spider sat patiently waiting, they were both crying, but also, had a sense of peace.

"Well," said the spider, "What can you tell me now about these jungle plants?"

"They grow fast and pull their nutrients from other dead or dying plants," said Delia.

"They also have to grow in lots of different directions," added Jared, "To find places where they can see the sun."

"They don't like being cut," said Delia, "But it happens all the time, and they're - I don't know - almost used to it. Accepting, I guess, is the best word."

"They, they're accepting of us," said Jared hesitantly. "They know that their *out* breath is what makes our *in* breath possible, and vice versa. They were glad to have the chance to speak to us again, but they've always loved us, and all the other plants and animals on the earth."

"That's some good listening," said the spider. "You two have some real potential. You need to rest, now. I'll introduce you to some more of the forest tomorrow. Lie down now. Try to sleep."

"Are you sure it's safe to sleep here? We've been keeping watch for wild animals and things at night," Jared wondered, even as he lowered himself to the ground.

"Are you forgetting I'm a linguist?" the spider said. "I've mastered speaking English. Surely you don't think I wouldn't know how to speak predator as well? There's not an animal in this forest I can't talk to. Rest easy, kiddos. I'll be up all night working on my web, and if anyone comes along, I'll just politely ask him or her to keep moving."

Relieved, and wondering in the back of his mind if he weren't delirious after all, Jared lay down and fell immediately into a deep, deep sleep. Delia did the same. All night long, the spider wove the web that would take them, albeit by a somewhat circuitous route, to the lair of the Violet Dragon.

***Dragon Task:*** Spend some time outdoors in 'the wild' this week.