

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

PART VII - Installment 27: 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 ...

Two children, Jared and Delia, are nearing the end of a long and dangerous quest to befriend seven Rainbow Dragons, as was foretold in an ancient prophecy. If they are able to fulfill the requirements of the prophecy, it says that peace and prosperity will come to the world. Presently, Jared and Delia are waiting outside the entrance to the cave of Bagranka, the Violet Dragon, the wildest and most dangerous dragon of all. She has returned from hunting, and they must convince her to show them her heart.

Our story continues...

Bagranka glared at Jared and Delia with suspicion. They knew that, unlike the other dragons, Bagranka could not speak to them. Nevertheless, every inch of her huge and powerful body broadcast the same message: WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!?!?!?

Jared and Delia, moving slowly, sat up and faced her straight on, keeping their hands in plain view. With a great roar, Bagranka rushed at them! Grabbing them with her powerful talons, she launched herself into the air. Delia screamed with fear as the ground dropped away at a terrifying speed.

"Hang on tight!" said Jared. "Wrap your arms and legs around her talon, Delia, just in case she's planning to drop us!"

But that was not in the great dragon's plan. As the sun began to appear slowly above the horizon, she flew them away from her mountain sanctuary toward the places where humans dwelled. From high in the sky, they could see the lush and wild greenness of forest and the sweeping golden grass of the plains. They flew over dark and soft hollows that housed swamps. Along the coast, they saw bogs and wetlands and birds galore, rolling dunes and rocky bluffs. It was so very, very beautiful, and so very, very quiet, the only sound the powerful "whoosh" of Bagranka's wings beating.

In the midst of these natural and beautiful landscapes, they could see that the farms and homesteads, the roads and cities, looked like scars. Some were better than others, nestled in places where they clearly fit, somehow, with the natural landscape. Others, insisting on rectangles and other shapes that don't occur naturally, gave Delia and Jared a funny aching feeling inside. They looked out of place, and a little bit painful. That was nothing, though, compared to what they saw when Bagranka flew them over a battlefield. If the human settlements had looked a little like scars, the battlefield was a gaping, smoking wound. Seeing it, Jared felt a great sadness welling up in him. He remembered his friend Theodore's story:

The Picts raided our farmhouse, burned our fields and spread them with salt so that nothing would grow there anymore. They slaughtered our animals and torched our house. Now my parents live in poverty in the city. My father was injured in the attack, and so he just sits around. My mother takes in laundry. They live with my brothers and sisters in a shack, barely keeping body and soul together. "Before the

Picts came, we had a good life. We had to work hard, but there was plenty of food, and at night, after the chores were done, we could sit around the fire and tell stories and sing songs. My house was full of joy. Now, my family's life is full of misery. I left as soon as I could, and I send back every penny I make, but still, my younger sister died last year of illness and hunger, because it wasn't enough to buy medicine."

He looked over at Delia, and could see that similar thoughts were haunting her. When she met his gaze, tears welled up in both of their eyes. Unable to wipe them away, because they were clinging so hard to Bagranka's talons, they simply let them drip, drop down their faces. Bagranka must have felt something, for she curved her neck around and looked at them, and something like compassion shimmered in her otherwise fierce eyes. With a sigh, she turned and began flying back to her cave.

Landing gently, she took a few steps away from Jared and Delia, then turned, and looked at them, a question in her eyes.

"Jared," said Delia. "It's time. You have to show her your treasure, so that maybe she'll show us hers."

Moving slowly, Jared reached into his knapsack, and removed his little treasure box. He lifted the lid, and Bagranka peered delicately at the shells, stones, feathers and sticks, nestled warm and safe in the blanket that Jared's birthmother had wrapped him in as a baby. She motioned with her head; clearly, she wanted him to take his treasures out of the box. He handed them to Delia, who cradled them in her shirt until he had removed the blanket and spread it out on the ground. One by one, he took his treasures, and told the story of how he'd found it.

"I found this stick the first time I got to go into the forest by myself. I didn't go far, that first time. I was only six, and Dad said I had to stay within earshot."

"This rock I found by the river on a day when I had spent hours swimming and laughing with my family. I wanted to remember the day, always, so I kept the rock."

"The shell I picked up on a really, really hard day. Some kids were teasing me about having two fathers, and I didn't feel like I could tell them about it because it would make them feel bad. So I went down to the shore by myself. I was so angry and so sad, I cried and yelled and everything, because the water and the birds were so noisy no one could hear me. After a while, I started to feel peaceful again, and that's when I saw the shell. It felt like a present, like the ocean wanted me to know I was a good person."

"This feather I found on the road on my way to Lord Sigismund's castle. I was really missing Dad and Pop, and I remembered that they said they were only a few miles from me 'as the crow flies.' Then, right as I remembered that, I saw this crow feather. Weird, huh?"

And so it went, one by one, all of Jared's treasures. He wasn't sure Bagranka understood what he was saying, but she watched him very, very carefully. When his treasures were all spread out on the blanket, Bagranka lowered her great head and gently, gently bumped Jared's head with hers. No words, but the gesture seemed to say, "You're okay, kid."

Then she turned and headed into her cave, stopping a few steps in to look back over her shoulder in invitation. Jared and Delia stood and dusted off their pants. Then, holding hands, they headed into Bagranka's cave. Like the cave they had traveled through on their way to Atlantis, Bagranka's lair was lit by an eerie, phosphorescent lichen. It wove quite a ways down into the ground, through chambers with amazing stalactites, stalagmites, and other interesting stone formations. At the bottom, they came to a

chamber that was dark, with no lichen at all. The walls were smooth as glass, and there was a deep, cold pool at the center, like a well. Bagranka circled the pool and settled on a shelf on a far side, gazing at them expectantly. Delia and Jared sat down gratefully at the edge of the pool. To their amazement, lights began to swirl in its depths!

As they watched, the lights exploded, and became pinpoints, like stars. The stars formed into galaxies, millions of them, more than they could even begin to count. Then one galaxy began to zoom closer, until the pool was so filled with stars the light made a sort of milky haze on the surface. One star in particular seemed familiar, and as they turned their attention to it, it began to come into focus. Planets swirled around the star, but they didn't look very familiar. It was as if they were in a space ship, traveling incredibly fast toward the third planet in the solar system, and then swooping in for a landing. It was all rock and fire, but then gases began to coalesce, and deep in a bubbling pool, a new light sparked into existence.

Jared and Delia gasped. They knew that something miraculous had just happened, but it only got better. At an incredible speed, the spark became more sparks, which started to work together and become increasingly complex life forms. Lichen began to break the rock into soil. Algae began to turn the carbon dioxide in the air into oxygen. Then it was as if a dam burst and an incredible variety of plants and animals began to grow, change, and die - worms and corals, insects and shellfish, ferns and mushrooms and trees and flowers, fish and amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals - and finally, on what was now a grassy savannah, ape-like creatures that began to walk on their hind legs.

Now their perspective began to shift, as if Bagranka were flying them away back into space. The little planet, which had been black and smoky, now was green and blue, with white clouds, and so achingly home that Delia and Jared felt a sense of peace wash over them.

Looking at Bagranka, they saw the globe reflected in her eyes, and understood, truly, where her heart was: in this miraculous, crazy, never-ending process that created more and more kinds of life.

Understanding, they also knew that their task here was complete, that even Bagranka, the wildest dragon, would fly at their call.

Excited, Jared leapt to his feet. "Thank you, Bagranka!" he said. "We'll let you rest now. Tomorrow, it will be time for you all to fly together. I hope you'll enjoy seeing your brothers and sisters again!"

The great dragon nodded once, then settled down on her ledge to gaze again into her pool. Jared and Delia hiked up through the cave to the place where they had camped the night before. Together, they began gathering the tokens they'd received from the other dragons.

"Okay," said Jared. "The prophecy says that we have to call on all seven of the dragons, now. That part should be fine. They've all agreed to come. But there's another part I'm a little worried about."

"What's that?" said Delia.

"Well, Les said they won't fly without the Rainbow Dragon to lead them, and that the Rainbow Dragon won't come unless I can call it by name."

"What else did Les say?" asked Delia.

"Let me see," said Jared, putting his excellent memory to the task. "She goes by many names, and he has no name, they take many shapes and sometimes no shape at all. All around, and inside every person, the spirit of the Rainbow Dragon dwells. Read the familiar name written in your heart, and speak it, and the Rainbow Dragon will come."

"That sounds like gibberish," said Delia.

Jared laughed. "It sure does. Maybe it will make more sense in the morning." And with that, the two children went to sleep for the night.

Dragon Task: *You have the UU principles in your heart! Talk about how that changes you.*