

ALPHATONDIK
THE VIRUS
CHRONICLES OF
DRAGONDOM & BEYOND

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DRAGONDOM & BEYOND
SERIES

LESLEY M. LAWS

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Cosmic Challenge





A note from the Author.

Aisha possibly could have met Merlin on Earth, but then, we would not have the opportunity to travel the Cosmos with him, or her. She would not be now standing on a planet, billions of light years from Earth.

She would never have understood the real power of the human mind, yes, she calls it magic, but what is magic if not something we do not presently have the ability here on Earth to scientifically put in a box. She would not have been able to open her super powers and become a cosmic warrior. Maybe in another timeline she would be classed as a Jedi. Now, Dralinmer and these growing numbers of warriors for freedom who Aisha has joined, will realize, in coming chronicles, that the darkling virus and the antagonists have already made more than just a small dent in our Galaxy and further out, like on Zor because no one believed it was possible.

Dralinmer, (look at that name again) Grand High Wizard of Dragondom and beyond, can be in many places at the same time as you will find-out. So is this what we are looking at today in quantum physics, quantum entanglement,

or the quantum theorem in action, or the creative imagination and abilities to scribe a story by an imaginative, intuitive writer?

We are all part of the Cosmic soup that is everything, and our cycles of existence are interlocked not just with the planet on which we live, but with all those others out there on other planets, and in other Galaxies and other Universes that right now most can only dream of; but, as disclosure is being shown more and more are beginning to understand that we are not alone. So let us venture once again into that incredible quantum space and across different dimensions of the all that is. Let us join them, and others from different species, in the timeless battle to keep hope alive and despite Free will, find a balance between the light and shadow controlling the darker, the darkest aspects which would indeed take us all into a very hopeless and desperate way of existence should the Cosmic antagonists beat our forces out there, beyond our view. Yet, out there it is ongoing for us and for others to have a quality of life, the ability to live, love and laugh.

Aisha and others are doing this for us. One day they will return, a new Generation. The Young One's will be found in the places, in different species, where they have been hidden; some are here. Maybe you know one? Maybe, if they can be reached and protected before the Dark Lords, the Archons and their collective master the Brain get them, they will be the saviors in the future, otherwise, the Dark Forces will continue to blacken the hearts of all and we, will continue to be the underground resistance fighters, fighting alongside Aisha and the others.

*Let the child within you fly.
Let your greatest dreams never die.
We are what we believe we can be,
It took me a long time to see
Yet, clear as a mountain stream
The true reality of that dream
Shows daily as I walk my walk.
Between the worlds of this reality
And whatever quantum duality
I wish to evoke.*

*We are all part of the cosmic soup
Energetic entities in a meat suit
So come and play with Aisha & me.
Turn your fantasy to reality.*

Lesley M. Laws





Preparing

The air was filled with static electricity which comes only when excitement and the beginning of a mission to unknown places is being planned. The troubles on Zor had only come to light while we viewed different parts of the All That Is with the help of Mestalii, without whose gift of being able to show anything you wished to view anywhere in the quantum reality of the Universes, we would have been diving in and out of vortex and portals in all directions. This had become a constant ritual now ever since the two incursions into this hidden realm by the agents or playthings of the Dark Lords.

While I had been training in the hidden college and learning a great deal more about myself and my abilities Dralinmer had been very busy. Ever since the opening of the Portal and the detention of some very prominent members of the Federation of all Galaxies; to those with whom they

worked with, the word had simply been that their unique services were requested for special missions and they would not be returning for now. Others were therefore placed in their stead and things quietened down, well on the surface at least.

It was known that others still went unnoticed within the ranks, but slowly every member of every galactic ship in the area was being given shore leave to enjoy a short break in the known area of Arionel to allow the dragons to do their vital work at recognizing them. Dragondom and the hidden part of Arionel itself seemed to have taken on even more magic and everyone was busy. I now realized just how little I had really seen or understood when I first arrived. Back then I had the impression that all who lived here were gentle fun-loving beings who couldn't hurt a fly, let alone would I have believed that they were indeed part of one of the most ancient and feared military forces in the Universe, feared that is by anything that intended to disrupt the fine balance that existed and allowed planetary living to follow its own course without outside interference.

As soon as I left the college Dralinmer had roped me back in immediately and now we spent a lot of time each day looking at what was happening right out to the very farthest reaches of the Universe, to zones many had all but forgotten.

The first signs of possible trouble had been detected on Zor, it was more a change in what Dralinmer remembered, and we were together at Mestalii at the time. We looked at each other. The feeling of fear and desperation could clearly be seen and felt in the collective consciousness of his people, and an unquiet was also detected in the consciousness of the planet. This special meeting was called. We made up a small operations group, the mission, to check out this quiet planet in one of the furthest galaxies. The team were those who had been chosen so far to become part of the first cosmic troubleshooter groups. Special Operations Force Alpha. I had trained with all of them over the last few moons at the hidden college where all warriors who worked with the dragons and elven forces finished their training.

The team included Tandur and two of his Torroons,

Randar and Hexlondios. Ipagar and three of the Dragondom Light warriors and their dragons. Octvindur and his white dragon known generally as 'Firestart', as a pair they were seasoned Light warriors having worked many missions off-world. Then there was Helena with her pink and red dragon 'Vapindor', both who had just graduated along with Raphina and her blue-black dragon 'Mindiusii'. Pyrinia had asked for two of her faerie forces and two of Nartius's unicorns to also join to assist and gain first-hand experience. These were Saphira, a master with the bow and her mount and partner Fortuna, a young stallion of immense magical prowess, also Petrina with her unicorn partner Raziput. Lastly, a leprechaun named Shamus and me. That made a full team of seventeen. A magical number.

Dralinmer gave us all a basic orientation of the planet which he had visited on many occasions in the past for special sweet herbs and provisions only available from the ancient forest and local villagers close by. Now, these delicacies came via the trading done with other areas. Using a holographic image, he walked us through the basics of the planet.

"Zor is a small planet in the Hylacian constellation far out on the very outermost reaches of the universe, in a small galactic cluster of forty-nine habitable planets spiraling round behind their sun. With two moons it is not very different from others close by, but the difference is in the planet being more water than land, and that water not being salty, acidic or otherwise unusable for land life and this thus also contains a fully integrated water-world."

He looked sideways at me, we both knew that part of me would be able to work this sector while others would be less well equipped. Then he continued his flow of information.

"Most of the land mass is all one and stretches as a belt around the equator with several island chains to the South West, but far off from the main land. These are the Centunirus Island chain of the southern Arcorsia Sea. To the North there is a further landmass surrounded by the Binorkan Sound at the narrowest section from the mainland

and the Ebrunian Sea to the West, with the North Arcorsia Sea to the South East. This is known as the lost land of Zyrodus by the Zendarians. Now, to the main body of land. Much is not densely inhabited being mostly high desert and even higher mountain ranges. Water is a problem in much of the area away from the coasts.”

Pointing all these things out as he gently spun the holographic planet, we could see the fresh water ocean occupied almost one-third of the whole. The mainland mass making almost a belt around the center, with a narrow channel in one sector. A Northern continent with, at one point, a peninsular jutting down to almost meet the mainland. Then, the Southern zone of the planet was made up of hundreds of Islands. All tallied with the descriptions he was giving us. It was strange but when he had been pointing out the peninsular to the northern landmass I felt a chill run down my spine. Now his wand pointed to a seemingly desert area beyond a vast mountain range which seemed to rise from swamp and ancient forest, almost bisecting one part of the mainland on the Western side of the straits.

“There are small dragons, animals and reptiles living in these harsh areas. Also underground dwellers, The Rendok. A race who are seldom seen and their partners the Aarnod. They run and harvest the Zanii crops for members of the Andoric civilization in a nearby star system. You will need to keep your dragons well away from any trading posts so your presence isn’t known, however, I believe you may need them.”

He looked at Ipagar with some concern showing in his ice-blue eyes. Then he moved his wand, as usual he grunted and continued when he was sure we were all taking notice.

“Elementals and tree fliers inhabit the swamps and ancient forest, while mixed humanoid and other groups live mainly on the high plateau where the majority of trade connects to the cosmos. Here also are a few staging zones for interplanetary cargo craft to land although mostly the smaller landing craft are the only ones permitted. On the low plains there were, and hopefully still are, small communities of humanoids who grow, and trade the unique fungi and

vegetation, herbs and spices they grow or forage in the ancient forest. Aisha, you will need to find a young lady called Mariana. She will be very useful to you.”

Nodding at me, he continued.

“You will know her when you meet. Her people are known as the Zendarians. They’re a peaceful, happy people and would not be able to defend themselves against anything they didn’t understand. They are children of Nature. It is them from whom I felt this terrible fear when we looked in on them. Whatever is happening we need to find out and fast.”

He sighed and looked at us all in turn while leaning forward on his walking staff.

“This is what you have all trained for. Call it a dry run, but, never underestimate those we go up against. This zone around Zor has not been watched for a long time. Yes, there is contact with the Federation, but I think we all understand now that what information comes via them is not always to be trusted. Because of this, Ipagar and I feel that going in very low key, unseen, is the best bet until you know what is going on. Remember, no heroics.”

Beloldwen gave us all her blessing and protection before we all completed our preparations and left. To ensure total secrecy, Dralinmer had asked permission from the Cosmic High Council of Magi and thus we left from his secret stone circle and from there vortexed to a special holographic space created specifically for us to travel on to Zor.

It was only here we realized the normal stone circles on Zor were now immobilized. It thus fell to me to find us another way in.

“Dralinmer. We seem to have a problem, there are no zones open, apart from the trading posts to vortex too. All those we have knowledge of are down.”

Before I had finished the last word, he was standing almost on top of me. His face was almost beetroot in color. His whiskers in his beard seemed to quiver. In my mind, his voice was almost like a foghorn.

“Then look for another, *child*. Don’t you remember

how to do such a simple thing as remote viewing without using Mestalii? What did I tell you when you first became my student? What?"

I almost cringed visibly. I had not thought. I had failed to do the simplest of things but had broken protocol and called for aid when it was not needed. It was pointless to apologize as he had disappeared again. So, I gathered my nerves, tried to hide my embarrassment at him having left his mind open when he told me off. I simply sat and drew myself out and towards our goal to find another entry point. I could hear Little One in my heart telling me to believe in myself. As I centered myself and opened to the All That Is, I found what I had missed in my haste.

We vortexed into a very old and forgotten stone circle in an area of the planet seldom visited by anyone. Somehow, I had dropped us in the mountains. Walking up the slight slope that rose above the drop-in zone, I needed to be alone. I knelt down and looked carefully over the ridge and out to the vista beyond.

"You overcame the obstacle and proved you can be a leader if you believe in yourself."

I turned slightly and there was Ipagar. He looked serious as usual, yet I caught a slight hint of softness in his voice. We had all agreed to use voice speak and shield our thoughts and minds until we knew what we were up against.

"I can only imagine how hard it must be to try to remember what you have lost for so long. You are doing well despite your lack of confidence in yourself. Just let it flow Aisha. Let everything flow instead of fighting to try and remember. Be like a cadet taking an exam, everything you need is inside you and will be there when you need it. Come let us see where you landed us."

He crouched down alongside me and created a miniature holographic image on the ground, a map of the area from the holographic globe Dralinmer had shown us.

Looking out, there below I could see the ancient forest and swampland which we knew circled it on three sides. Beyond to my right, were mountains that rose so high their peaks were hidden in the clouds, occasional craggy rock

faces peeped between the cloud for a second or two. Beyond these, from Dralinmer's description, and the map, would be the desert. Directly ahead on the far side of the ancient forest, beyond a swath of many miles wide, made up of the swamp, was the freshwater sea.

The main part of the land in front of us was in two main sectors. The low-lying plateau linking the ancient forest and to my left, the high plateau which was more equable to life. However, this was the area near the forest we had to check out first. Somewhere amongst the many small communities, I had to find Mariana. I knew Dralinmer was worried about her and her people, but, I had a feeling there was more to what he felt than what he had told us. In fact, I was becoming aware as we looked out over the area of a deep unquiet that was even tangible in the air.

Satisfied we knew where we were, Ipagar and I once more joined the others. While we had been gone Tandur, Randar and Hexlondios, had scouted around. The stone circle was partly overgrown and many of the stones were partially buried. Close-by they had found a series of large caves which would be ideal to make a base camp. Big enough also for the dragons to be safe while we were out. Water seeped out between the rocks in the back of one of them and trickled into an ancient pool. Icy and crystal clear it was a welcome find. Between them, the group had set up light and warmth within. Shamus was busy looking at the rock formations and crystals, quietly making sounds of excitement at what he was finding. Ipagar suggested we started making our roster of what was most important and who would be doing what and where.

"Do you want me to do it?"

I nodded.

"Please Ipagar. I need to start to quietly reach out and see what I find, so we don't run into anything we may not expect. Maybe Tandur and his men could start the watch, once that is done?"

He nodded and walked over to the others leaving me to go within and remote view.

"Little One, I'm going to take a look around from here,

will you keep our heart-link open, please? Have you picked up on anything since we arrived?"

"Yes, there is definitely 'darkling' presence, please take care. I'll meld so I can bring you back immediately should it be unsafe. Firestart, Vapindor and Mindiusii can take over here. I'll inform Ipagar."

This was all the reply I needed, we all worked as one. For all of us this was the first time working fully together, and while some had been on previous missions or like Tandur and his men, were more used to battle preparation, others were totally green. I included myself in that group as, although I had done many missions now for Michael, this was my first in the physical with the elven forces. I didn't want to make any more mistakes so now opened up the holographic map again just to double check my directions before going out. I relaxed and started breathing deeply to be able to release my inner self to soar over the area and go down into the community's unseen. Knowing my avatar was safely here. It was good to have Little One with me.



Remote Viewing Recon

I reached out and projected myself out over the area we had looked at earlier. Gliding gently down so I was at a reasonable height above the lower plain I started looking for small communities. Even I could feel something was not right. By the light of the twin moons, I could see quite clearly. In a direct line from my body, I had simply orientated myself to going in a straight line along the forest edge. I drew on the eyes of the owl, but, this way, unlike when shapeshifting, without the itch from the feathers.

The first settlement seemed deserted, yet, as I used my mind to enter each small home, I found signs that people had left in a hurry. Furniture was overturned, dishes unwashed and the embers in the fireplaces were cold. At a couple of the larger cottages, the doors had been splintered and hung off their hinges.

Through my mind's eye, I followed the main track

from the settlement and as it led into the edge of the forest I came upon several new graves alongside the path. I knew then that something terrible had happened here. Was it an illness? Was it the darkling? Or was it something else?

I had to go on. I had to try and find out more before any of us could go in in daylight, or in our true forms. None of the landing party had ever been to Zor. Not even Ipagar, so this basic scouting was really important.

Four more small hamlets or villages I found were the same. Then, as I was about to give up, I detected movement.

A young woman. Dressed in brown that blended into the background was running bent over as if trying to hide in the shadows. I watched her for a while as she appeared to be collecting things in blankets from different homes, then, with all she could drag she set off into the trees. Not by the pathway but using the bushes to give her cover.

Again, I followed. I knew she could not see me, yet she kept looking back as if she knew something was there, or maybe it was the fear I saw in her eyes. Something I had not witnessed since starting this journey. Something I knew from Earth. Like a doe caught in the headlights, she fled in stops and starts. I wanted to reach out with my mind and tell her not to be afraid. I knew I mustn't for her sake as well as ours.

Eventually, she ducked into a cave, half hidden by vines. Again, I followed. Invisible and silent. Inside there was a narrow corridor that then led into a cave. There was minimal light, this was being produced by fireflies that rested in small clusters in various areas of the narrow passageway and the cave itself. As if by design I could see that each cluster was near to a person or a small group. Some lying, some sitting. I heard the quiet sobbing of women and children in the gentle light. I could feel the sadness and the pain. Then I caught her name.

"Mariana, help me."

I watched her swiftly move to tend to the individual. She helped him to sit up slightly and then gave him a drink. I could see his face was heavily bandaged and he seemed very weak. She whispered quietly, I strained to hear but could not, however, the fact they were also using voice speak told me a

great deal. I wanted to ask what had happened, but knew at the very least I had found who I needed to. Dralinmer was right, she was an important contact, important also to her people. So, I returned to my body, and found Little One wrapped around me, my friend and protector and yes, my teacher. I stirred slightly and he sighed as if relieved that I was back.

“Did you see?”

“Yes, I saw. I also felt and smelt the darkling in all of the areas you went to. You were right Aisha to not open your mind to her. Come, I know you wish to go out again, but first, let us tell the others and then I will watch with you again.”

The news I brought was greeted with silence from the team, then the question came as to what was fear. I had forgotten, that for the young elven light warriors and the one faerie, that had never before been away from Dragondom, they did not know what fear was. I didn't really know how to explain it. It was Tandur who stepped up to the task, and I retreated again with Little One to once more go out into the night and check out other areas remotely.

“What do you think happened, really?”

I turned and Ipagar was standing not far from me.

“To be honest, it looked as if someone had, something had, come in and taken some of the villagers by force and hurt, possibly killed others. Little One said he felt and smelt the darkling, I must admit I saw fear in her eyes, a type of fear I have not witnessed other than on Earth. With that in mind, it may be that there are agents physically taking the locals either for slaves or worse.”

We looked at each other for a second.

“Do you want me to just vortex out to the trading post and see what I can pick up? Save you from going out again?”

I shook my head before answering.

“No. It's best done this way Ipagar. We need to know what beings are around before we go dropping in and find we are totally out of place. I'll be okay. Little One is melding with me so if there's a problem he can bring me back fast without using mind speak. Maybe you can help Tandur explain what fear is.”

I had to smile, for it suddenly crossed my mind that as an Elf, Ipagar probably had never felt it either. Yet, I knew Tandur had.

On our own again in the corner of the cave Little One melded his heart- mind to mine once more and this time I ventured out to check on the high plateau trading post, the cargo ships and space hopper landing crafts. Then intended to take a quick check out over the swamp and maybe up to the mountains. This time I would do as much as possible without coming back unless there was an emergency. I also wanted to memorize possible safe zones we could use for vortexing from place to place so Ipagar could place them on the map for all to be aware of.

When I started viewing over the high plateau, I noticed there was, in fact, a lot of small craft air traffic. The cargo craft zone was some way away from the trading post itself. Maybe a little more than two miles further out into the plateau and thus not visible from where we had landed. Craft seemed to be coming in exclusively from off the central plateau interior and from the direction of the sea. While I found this interesting, I decided first to look at who was in town so to speak.

Through my mind's eye, I perched myself on the edge of one of the buildings at roof height so I could watch everything, everyone going past. On Earth, we call it people watching. A perfect way to gauge what is going on somewhere. Although it was night-time, the trading post was busy. I was amazed to see so many different beings, many I had no knowledge of, yet, many if I used my imagination, I could see the resemblance to mammals from Earth, however, here these were either part humanoid or a mixture of several types all with speech and interacting with higher consciousness.

There were also the small groups of Federation members in uniform, as well as the locals. These including the elementals and those I presumed, were traders from the desert zone for they were small and totally covered in long dust covered coats, hoods pulled far forward so no sight was possible of their faces. Small dragons and other flying beings

ducked and dived above and between the tallest beings in an effort to get from A to B. In all respects it seemed to be a very cosmopolitan grouping.

From here I pushed my mind out further and homed in on the area apart from where the landing crafts and cargo ships seemed to be both loading and also rushing in and out from the hinterland. The first sector of this very large zone was standard Federation of Galaxies in design from what I had been shown during my orienteering and re-learning.

Beyond this was where several small landing crafts had recently come in from both out of the darkness further into the high plateau and from an area which would either be from the land near to the coastline or from the sea itself. I pushed my mind forward as I watched another craft coming into land. Suddenly I stopped. It was as if I had hit a force field, yet I couldn't detect anything. Almost at the same time, the craft I was watching shimmered slightly and although I was watching the area on the ground where it should have landed. Nothing. It had simply disappeared.

Now, I was being pulled backwards. It could only be Little One bringing me back for some reason. What was happening? My mind was spinning when I opened my eyes. I looked around quickly expecting there to be some emergency, but no, everything was quiet. I could feel Little One's heart beating hard through my back as I rested against him.

“What happened?”

“Sorry, Aisha. You were about to walk into a trap. That space was a hologram and I couldn't see where or what it hid. All I know is the ‘darkling’ was very strong there. Please forgive me. It was too dangerous. I had to step in as I couldn't, dared not, tell you and break the silence.”

I laid my head back and looked up into Little One's big eyes. We joined the others and filled them in on what I had seen. I watched Ipagar's face when Little One explained what he had felt and the reason he had pulled me back before I had a chance to go elsewhere. I was about to suggest I would go back out but never got that far. Ipagar stepped in.

“I think we have enough to get started.”

He looked straight at me as if to stop me from saying anything to contradict him.

“Aisha, the zones you noticed for easy vortexing. Can you place them on the map for us please and we will work out who can best go where from what you did find out.”

He thought the holographic map into existence. Before long we had completed the drop in points and memorized them. It was then decided that from the wide variety of beings I had noticed in the trading post that Shamus the Leprechaun would be best-suited to go there and intermingle to get as much information as possible. He was to get himself somewhere to live and be our contact in place. When I had been remote viewing, I had noticed, what I presumed was a meeting place from the amount of footfall in and out called the Katocrak. He would spend some time there each moonrise in case we had to contact him with information. Apart from that, he would report back in one moon cycle unless there was something very important. If that was the case, he would simply vortex back.

Because I had not managed to get out over the swamp nor the desert area and mountains it was decided that while I took a short rest, Little One would take Tandur and one of his warriors out and see what was happening over in the desert sector nearest to the mountains. They were to find places where we could vortex too securely. If it looked safe, and they could make a safe camp, then they would remain and he would come back before sun up giving us the co-ordinates. As time was short, they left immediately.

The most experienced Light warrior, Octvindur and his white dragon Firestart would check out the mountains for safe zones and see if they could feel anything in the way of lifeforms or darkling activity in the area. The other Torroon would stay here at base camp with the dragons and initially the other two elven Light warriors. Ipagar insisted on checking out the cargo depot and the area where I had found the space anomaly and holographic cover.

At dawn, I would go back to the cave where I had found Mariana along with the fae and the unicorns. They would use their beautiful healing magic to help and also

connect with the forest and other elementals while I found out as much as I could on what had happened from Mariana. I also knew that with a master fae bow woman with us that there was backup should anything come up that was unexpected. I had watched some of them back during the training and their speed and ability was unlike anything I had witnessed before, yet, they looked so dainty. At least one of us would return after darkness fell again, reporting in and wait for news from Ipagar. In the meantime, we would keep our minds shielded and not use our telepathic communication in case it was picked up. While we could all close off to all others and single stream our thoughts to just one, we were up against the unknown and were not sure if they may feel the energy fields this caused. So, for security, all communication would-be old-fashioned face to face unless it was a matter of real emergency and a call for assistance, then if a dragon and rider were available, emergency calls could be passed from dragon to dragon via their unique closed communication.

Now, as those who were going to check-out other zones had left, and that included Little One, I sat in a quiet corner and tried running over what I had seen in the hope I could make some sense of it. There was something nagging at my memories, something trying to come to the surface since I saw the damage in the villages. A memory?

Disjointed pictures started to form behind my closed eyelids. First what I had witnessed when I remote viewed and then; others. I could smell smoke and see flames licking at the orange sky. The air was full of choking fumes and I was with others, looking through my eyes I was seeing everything as a person, possible me in another time and place. Screams to the side made me turn, a woman was being dragged across the ground by a very tall being totally dressed in black with a black cape and what looked like a helmet with a static visor. The shape of this latter was oval with pointed ends, one sticking out at the back, the other like a pointed beak out the front. In one fist, the woman's hair dragging her as she tried to get her feet unsuccessfully and screaming as she tried in vain to stop herself losing hair by grabbing at that black

gloved hand. Two children ran out from the side, behind the edge of a building, they attacked the massive “thing” as if they, so small, could stop him.

Like gnats being swatted his free hand complete with what looked like a light sword flashed out and they flew backwards through the air as if they had been hit by a massive force. One hit the wall of the place they had been hiding, the other flew so high he hit the side of the roof and then crumpled as he slid off and hit the ground. Both lay still.

Suddenly I felt myself moving, as if being dragged from the scene. My hands literally went to my throat and there, I felt a metal collar. Around my wrists were chains. I was in a line of others. Captives. A line of humanity unable to do anything to help those still trying to fight for their lives as their world burnt. Then I saw the face as it literally came in as if thrust literally up to my face. Oh gods those eyes. Red eyes, and in the polished face visor, or was it a visor? Black as night the reflection of a craft, the ramp down and lines of chained victims being loaded. The face, the visor, the eyes burnt into my memory.

Then I was back in the now. Petrina was shaking my shoulder. For a second I fought. Then as I became more aware I checked myself, looking at her concerned face.

“You were calling out in your sleep, I, we were worried.”

So it was that our mission on Zor began.



The Truth Revealed

Vortexing into the ancient forest close to the entrance to the cave where I had witnessed Mariana, and the remnants from the villages. Saphira and Petrina the faeries along with Fortuna and Raziput immediately felt at home. They could feel the local elementals and their presence was also picked up. I watched in amazement as from nowhere all around us tiny beings started to manifest. Fortuna started to glow as, without using telepathy he was literally sending his warmth and gentleness to all around and finding at the same time, the exact language that these beings used.

This would allow us to communicate locally without detection. I was witnessing a small part of the beautiful power of the Unicorns, a thing I had not, until now, had a chance to see. The air around us was visibly changing, there was a radiant rainbow light that started as a sphere around Fortuna and was now growing outwards. This was taking in everything around him, even the trees and land. The edges

shimmered in pulsing rainbow colors. As I also became encompassed in this sphere, I was suddenly aware of all the voices around me. With a full understanding of all.

Petrina was talking with one of the dryads that had become visible in a nearby oak-like tree, Saphira was now sitting on the forest floor literally covered in tiny faeries, nymphs and sprites. All talking at once. Laughter and excitement came from those around Fortuna and Raziput who also had their backs covered with tumbling and joyful elementals. I had to smile, yet I was also trying to catch the important words that would tell us what had happened, was happening here. Something touched my leg. I looked down and there was a small deer.

“Can you hear me?”

The surprise must have shown on my face. But, then, I shouldn't have been surprised, I had been in Dragondom long enough to know that everything has a voice if you know how to listen.

“You're different from the others. Are you here to help Mariana? I hope so, we all need help now.”

I put my hand down and the deer let me stroke its head. Then, down pounced a squirrel and ran up my arm and sat on my shoulder.

“Me too. Me too. Mariana always strokes me. Me too.”

So I stroked it as well while I listened to the deer and then waited while he went to tell Mariana I was coming in and meant no harm. I also kept an ear, so to speak, on the other conversations around me while I learnt the finer points of Zorean squirrel.

“Aisha.”

It was Saphira calling me.

“Yes?”

“We are getting a lot of intel. See what you can get from Mariana. When you go into the cave, Fortuna will send his shield with you to the entrance so this whole sector including the entrance will be basically holographically shielded, this space will not exist in normal Zor time. Call it a security measure because of what we are finding out. Okay?”

I simply nodded in acknowledgement and as soon as I

saw the deer exit and stand by the entrance I walked forward, taking the rainbow edged holographic field with me. The inside of the cave was almost exactly as I had recalled it from my remote viewing. Except now Mariana was standing in the middle of the main chamber with the deer now alongside her and what would easily be classed as a halo around her head, made up of fireflies. I could see the strain on her face. The sides of the cave where I had seen the groups of people where however dark.

“My name is Aisha, don’t be afraid, I am here to help not hurt, as are my friends who are outside.”

I had used voice speak and I saw her relief. She made a quiet clicking sound and I noticed streams of fireflies coming out of hiding and settling back into groups on the walls of the caves, gradually illuminating all the interior with their gentle green light. I moved closer, and the squirrel which was dancing backwards and forwards across my shoulders leapt through the air and landed on her shoulder and nuzzled her neck.

“Come. If you are here to help you had better know what has, is, happening here. We, Zendarians, don’t usually live in caves you know.”

She smiled sadly. I followed her to a quiet place further back in the cave and sat down on a boulder opposite her. The squirrel and deer still with us as if afraid to leave her.

She gently stroked their soft fur and then told them to go and join the one called Arnioma and the children until I was ready to leave. We both watched them leave and I could visibly see the love in her face for these beautiful creatures. Now she started to tell me the terrible tale of what had been happening here for the last three moon cycles. Her method of doing this was not what I had expected, yet, it was in its own way probably the best way of doing so. She took my hand and immediately transported me back so I could witness for myself what had transpired.

It had all started one fine day, filled with laughter when she and some of the other villagers had been coming home with their days harvest from the forest. It was clear to

me that they did not grow their food in fields but rather did so as part of the natural cycle and natural balance of nature within the forest edges. Planting crops within the natural growth below the tree canopy in areas close enough to make collection easy, yet without destroying anything.

As they neared the village with their baskets and bags filled with food and herbs a child had come running to say one of the villagers from another area had arrived and was in sore need of Mariana's medical help. They had all run with the youngster to see what was needed. The patient had been taken to Mariana's small cottage on the edge of the village and when she went in, it was the fear on the man's battered face that stood out, even to me, as being almost in a catatonic state. She had bathed his shivering body and wrapped the wounds that she found with herbs, and also the festering ones with a natural poultice. All the time receiving pictures flashing in her mind as she tended him.

Pictures of caped beings with whips and strange weapons which sent the recipient of the force field emanating from them into uncontrollable spasms. Tall, dark and menacing, faces seemingly hidden beneath grotesque masks, they lashed out at all they found in one way or another. Then we witnessed through the eyes of the patient as he hid, many of the younger villagers, both male and female being rendered unconscious and thrown into a pile. He witnessed a craft, as black as night, come down and hover just off the ground. A slight noise as the whole of the back of the craft opened like a mouth and simply scooped the unconscious bodies up, these were followed by the dark attackers. Then as the craft closed up again it simply seemed to disappear.

I felt a chill run down my spine. I went to move my hand thinking she had finished but she dug her fingers in tight and held me in place. She showed me her using the stone circles to go out to the village's further out on the lower plateau. For some, she was in time to raise the alarm and many headed and moved out into the swamplands, for others, it was already too late and she helped the sick where she could and together with her own clan's people and the elementals and animals helped move others to safer places.

She tried to send word to the trading posts on the high plateau and although she had sent three times no help arrived.

Then the stone circles stopped working and it had taken her many days to get home. Almost nightly she saw strange crafts flying silently and low in the skies overhead. Some going over the swampland and disappearing out over the sea. Others that seemed to go in the direction of the high plateau and then simply vanish. She had arrived back home only two moons ago and found total destruction. Those who she had found hiding, or badly injured and left for dead, were now, here. And so this brought us up to the Now. She let go of my hand and turned away and busied herself drawing water from a pot she had filling below a trickle of water coming out of the rock face. A natural spring. When she turned back towards me, she had composed herself and I saw below the gentleness an icy strength.

“If you are really here to help. First I need help here with the sick, and also safe ways to get food and herbs for we are nearly out. Then I need to find a way to get word to my sister out on the far side of the swamp, on the shores of the sea. She is a very powerful mage in her own right and will know, I am sure, how to deal with these barbarians. What I don’t understand is why she hasn’t answered my calls.”

It was said not as a question but as an observation.

She looked me straight in the eyes. I could feel her pain, yet also her determination. It was not a weak plea for help, but, almost a demand. That steely strength I understood and admired.

“On all those counts we can help. I will go and get the other members of my team from outside who are here specifically, like me to find out what is happening, help where we can and to stop the perpetrators. So you see, we are on the same side.”

I smiled, and then as an afterthought, I added.

“Strange Dralinmer never mentioned your sister, yet, he was absolutely determined it was you who I should connect with first, beyond anyone else on the planet.”

At the mention of Dralinmer, her face lit up.

“You were sent by my wise old friend? By Zorgon. He and Mestalii his special boneheaded tree friend must have picked up my call. Now I know we are going to be helped. Oh, Joy...”

She never finished her words as jug in hand she rushed off to tend to someone who had cried out. I was about to head for the passageway that led outside when I saw the little deer re-enter with both Raziput and Petrina in tow. Petrina reached out in Zorean elemental speak and told me that it was safe to use that now as the entire area around the cave was being held in a separate portal of spiral space by Fortuna. To say I was amazed is an understatement, but, I was learning fast that the Unicorns had immense gifts which were far beyond anything I had ever imagined. Before this mission was over I had no doubt that they would be shown in many ways.

“Help with the sick and those who need to know there is nothing more to fear. We must bring the vibrations back up. We also need help to get food and wild herbs for them and to restock Mariana’s medical herbs. What is Saphira doing?”

“She’s talking with the dryads and the others, and will about now probably be on her way to meet with Findelstan, the one who watches over all in this zone, to seek permission to harvest on behalf of Mariana and tell her of our presence here, who sent us and the reason for it.”

With that, she reached into her small pouch that hung around her neck and withdrew some fairy dust. I watched with a smile as she blew it into the air and the whole cave lit up with a gentle golden light that chased away every dark place within the whole. It was in fact as light now as a warm summer’s day.

I smiled, shook my head and headed back outside. I was part, it seemed, of an amazing team. That, I had a feeling, over the next few moons was going to become more and more apparent as I learnt their strengths and we got used to working together. As the light of the twin moons started to rise over the lower plains on Zor, I said goodbye to all and made my way once more into the reality that was outside the

safety of the parallel space that Fortuna had created for everyone's protection.

The air had a distinct chill to it as I prepared to vortex back to base camp. I was hoping that Little One and the others had better news than mine, and also that Ipagar would have found out what we were really up against. I took a few deep breaths and focused my mind on where I wished to go. In the blink of an eye everything around me was spiraling round and round, and then I was there.

I landed at the mouth of the caves that we had used as our base and nearly frightened the life out of Hexlondios who had just been walking out of the cave entrance. I would have to be more careful next time, but, had not wanted to land in the stone circle in case someone detected my energy and got curious. Fortunately, he had held back from sending out a sound blast from his staff and had instead been ready to fell an intruder. The staff whistled past my head, missing by fractions, as he realized who it was and shifted slightly. I heard someone laugh behind me and turned to see Ipagar sitting on the rocks not far away, looking relaxed.

He got up, still laughing.

"While I understand your desire to get here, you really should be more careful where you land. You could have been brained. Next time why not aim for the other side of the rocks so you can call that you are here and save everyone from ageing."

He walked past me into the cave entrance without another word. Hexlondios relaxed his grip on the staff and shook his bovine head.

"Sorry about that. But, he's right, I could have hurt you. Please, Aisha, don't frighten me like that again. I could have done you real damage and no one would have been ready to forgive me in a hurry, even though I could easily say I was only doing my job. My hide would probably have been roasted over the nearest fire."

Laughing quietly as he turned and returned to his post by the front of the cave. I called quietly after him.

"I promise I won't arrive quite like that again; I won't frighten you, promise, next time, honestly."

I also laughed and mimicked rubbing my head as if he had indeed hit me with his staff.

“Is Little One inside? Are the others back?”

I got my answer with a warm breath on my neck. Then a whisper in my ear.

“I’m here, I’ve been trying out my chameleon translucent self to see how well I can hold it, here, and for how long. So, even you didn’t see us. Now that is a great amount of progress in a short time. It seems we will be able to be more useful here than anyone thought.”

He playfully nudged me forward towards the cave.

“Come on. Ipagar has only been waiting for you to get back before he briefs us all. Wouldn’t do it till you were here. Move. We all want to hear what he found and also about your findings.”



First Debriefing

We all went inside and the force field was placed across the entrance once we were all in. It was Hexlondios who did it using his staff in a circular movement along with a low vibrational vocal sound. I knew that anyone passing by would now have no idea anyone was here. Around the central fire sat all those who were present, and the small firelights around the edges of the cave danced in their magical way without fuel, giving a bluish hue to everything.

All except for Shamus, Tandur and Randar were present, along of course with the unicorns and fae who I had left back in the Ancient Forest.

Ipagar insisted I filled them in on what I had learnt first as it might fill in some of the blanks for him before he told us of his findings, so I briefly told them of what I had witnessed through Mariana's eyes, what she had seen. There was a long silence. Ipagar, sat, contemplating and looking

into the dancing elven firelight.

Eventually, with a flick of his hands, he created a holographic image that materialized just above the flames. It started out with a view of the holographic image of the landing bays I had seen the night before. Then he took us beyond this.

He had been lucky. There was a small ledge of reality just inside the hologram of the base and then nothing. It was hiding an open wormhole into space. All we could see was a swirling vortex with stars spinning around its walls and the backend of a craft disappearing into the void of space. He looked at each of us in turn. No one said anything. He cleared his throat.

“On the way back here I called into the trading post and caught up again with Shamus. It was thanks to him that I got in the way I did and safely out again. He has got into a small group already that work out at the cargo zone and he will carefully take a look and listen for anything that may give us an idea as to what is going on; also who we are up against before we go blindly into the wormhole ourselves. From what he has found out already there is a lot more going on, on this planet that we know nothing about. He is following a trail at the moment using his expertise in geology and mining.”

Still, silence from all of us. Each obviously becoming more aware that this was turning into something more than just a small mission checking on a few anomalies on a small backwater planet.

“Come Octvindur. What did you and Firestart find when you checked out the high mountains?”

We all looked over to the young elf who was standing slightly apart and leaning back against the foreleg of his beautiful white dragon. His arms crossed and looking very relaxed.

“Well, the first time we flew past we didn’t pick up anything. Going from one end of the mountain range to the other we slowly made our way downwards. Basically mapping the area for future use. Firestart has an uncanny eye and sense and he was sure there was life there.”