



## I

OK, SO I WAS BORED and impatient. My healing clinic was being handled by my students. In fact, several were treating new clients with far more aplomb than I'd ever mustered. There hadn't been an assignment from the Galactic Grand Council for years, and frankly, I was itching for a challenge.

I hadn't seen Nandia since our last Council mission, when we had helped King Sabre of the planet Aesir see his way through a rough patch or two. Since then, Nandia and I had remained in telepathic connection, but even that had waned these past weeks — for far too many weeks. It was unlike her not to touch base, to ask about my life and share hers. OK, it wasn't so much that I was bored and impatient. I was worried.

God knows I'd tried to telepathically reach out to her. But, whenever I made the attempt, it was as if I ran into some kind of impenetrable grey cloud that blocked all connection.

All right, truth be told, I was in a quandary. I've

always known Nandia to be quite capable of dealing with any kind of crisis. But since our Aesir caper, we had never gone even a week without at least a hello.

OK, so I was more than worried, I was afraid. And afraid to admit that I was afraid.

I stood up from the bench beneath a willow tree that had become my office these past troubled weeks and began to wander aimlessly through my garden. Lately, I hadn't even noticed the new blossoms on the magnificent mango and cherry trees. Their fragrance I sensed only in the dim shadows of my subconscious. As I ambled, I had to admit that I had been completely ignoring the beauty of my outer reality, which, given my love of nature, was unusual. Mentally grabbing myself by the shoulders, I insisted that I get a grip and make a decision — any decision — even if it was the wrong decision. Still, I worried and by the minute grew more irritated at my worry. If Nandia and her husband were going through some trouble, contacting her could exacerbate their problem. Or perhaps they were going through a sublime season and my reaching out could prove an embarrassing interruption.

Even though I could just as well imagine useful, playful ways that Nandia and I could reconnect, my mind, like a homing pigeon, came to roost on what else could be causing this break in telepathy. What if she was in pain and unable to ask for help? Suppose her planet had been subjected to an epidemic and her telepathic ability had become blocked? During our first Galactic Council assignment in planet Fantibo's city of Geasa, almost exactly that scenario had played out. That is, until we had found enough copper to neutralize the zinc deposits that were disrupting our

dowsing, telepathic and teleporting abilities.

Rather than continue this useless debate, I finally realized that what I truly wanted was to attempt another contact with Nandia — even if I failed yet again.

Relieved, I returned to my garden office and sat down with renewed determination. I closed my eyes and began deep breathing in preparation for a telepathic connection. I recalled my mentor Agoragon's advice to imagine my target person engaged in some sort of activity as I sent my message. Of course telepathy is enhanced whenever a deep emotional connection exists. I remembered the time in the hallways of Aesir's palace when Nandia and I had playfully kissed, ran away, chased, captured and kissed again, our passions teetering on the brink of oblivion. A smile for these past love antics lit my face.

It was easy for me to picture Nandia's eyes, almond shaped, deep blue-green in color. After untold centuries of living, her eyes reflect a playfulness that reveals an ageless wisdom. Imagining her playing tag with me, I mentally probed her presence with a greeting and a question about her well-being. But, as before, damnit, I encountered a dark roiling cloud — as if a distant expanse of sparkling ocean had suddenly been eclipsed by a marauding thunderstorm.

While I brooded, an image of the cat Sirius leapt into my mind. As a young kitten, he had been gifted to us at the end of our Aesirian mission. After our last Grand Council debriefing, Nandia had asked to take him home. Handing him over, I knew I would deeply miss the black-furred, white-toed rascal. He was as full of vitality and as irreverent as Arcturus, his father. Both were capable of telepathy and teleportation and

both enjoyed a respectable disregard for the conventions of the English language. Had he come to mind at just that moment because now was the time to connect telepathically with him?

It was easy to imagine Sirius at play, white toes flashing like strobe lights as he scampered about. Before relinquishing him, I had spent hours enjoying his exuberant vitality. Not one for squeak toys or catnip, he did enjoy mousing with a rubber ball that contained a tiny bell within its gizzards. I imagined him soccer-dribbling his ball while telepathing my message: “You dank, dizzy-eyed dogstar, how’s Nandia?”

It was as if I were hearing a radio not clearly tuned into a station. Static surrounded the few words I could make out.

“Cxchsxsxsx...Need help....chxsxsxs...Get here.....xsxsxschcx.....” It was Sirius, spitting clipped, concise words — quite uncharacteristic of him. Normally his language was laced with an alarming misuse of obscure Australian idioms — obviously learned at his father’s knee.

But, double damnit all, my worst fears had been confirmed. I stood and again began pacing my garden. I knew Nandia lived on a planet called Praesepe. She mentioned a home located near a town called Warragin, explaining that its name had originated centuries earlier from the local indigenous people. It was the site of a battle that had led to the abduction of an entire generation of children — the conqueror’s plan was to socialize captured youngsters into their new culture. A search of star charts could locate Praesepe, but not its city of Warragin. Damnation! If I was going to teleport

there, I needed more information in a hurry. To effectively teleport, a traveler needs to accurately visualize his landing zone.

I decided to telepathically contact the Galactic Grand Council. There was an elder who sat on the Council whom I had nicknamed Liberace because of his outrageous sparkly outfits and outlandish gestures. Returning to my office bench I again calmed myself with deep, connected breathing. Liberace's fleshy, handsome face came to mind. I imagined him watching his own fingers fondle bejeweled rings — his habitual affectation whenever he puzzled a problem. I sent a message requesting an audience.

Liberace's startled face appeared vividly in my mind's eye. He looked as if he had been interrupted from a nap. "Thank God you've called," he exclaimed, rapidly blinking and shaking his head. "The Council convenes within the hour to address a crisis on Praesepe. Nandia is somehow involved. Stand by. We will teleport you to our chambers and share what little we know. Expect to be joined by Elli and Dunstan."

I stood and waited, continuing deep breathing as I sought to calm my troubled mind. With barely enough time to brush my brows and assure that my lockpicks and pendulum were in place, I once again found myself in the familiar Council chambers, facing the dozen Council Elders of varying species, sizes, genders and descriptions seated at an elevated semicircular table. Several were humanoid, a few reptilian, the others mostly alien species, unknown to me.

My mind returned to puzzle over a nagging mystery: How could the chamber's lighting, with its unknown source, illuminate only me and the Council,

while leaving the rest of the immense rock cavern shrouded in darkness? An elder had informed me during an earlier briefing that the cavern provided failsafe shielding from not only electromagnetic but also telepathic eavesdropping.

“Welcome, Bernard.” Their collective mental greeting appeared in my mind as a chorus of warm feeling-tones. I smiled in deep gratitude for these beings. Their lives were devoted to healing planets; respect for them reverberated to the ends of the inhabited galaxies.

“What news of Nandia?” I asked in the midst of meeting each Elder’s gaze as I scanned the semicircle of beings. My worry over Nandia was interrupted, however, by the abrupt appearance of Dunstan and Elli. They arrived holding hands. Each was a much beloved ally whom Nandia and I had befriended during past Council missions, although, to my knowledge, neither of them knew the other.

El we had met just after beginning our second mission on Aesir. She is an immortal who has not only served many Aesirian kings as The Royal Chambermaid, but married several and even given birth to several during her centuries of devoted service. With a lightning-quick mind and agile wit, she proved to be an invaluable guide at court and quite adept at teleporting and telepathy.

A large and charismatic Scotsman, Dunstan is a talented healer and musician. Nandia and I met him during our mission to Geasa, where he had exiled himself to busking throughout its streets, for the sole purpose of lifting the troubled spirits of the city’s inhabitants. With a rare talent for playing music that

stimulates healing, Dunstan proved to be quite useful as we tamed the deadly Saragalla epidemic that had threatened Geasa's survival.

I was thrilled to see these dear friends again and turned toward the musician with the jibe, "Ya flamin, red-haired gudgeon, have you finally learned to play a decent tune on that shiny brass screech-horn you're still carrying around?" He grabbed me in a giant embrace that was quickly interrupted by an admonition from a Council Elder.

"Time is of the essence for this briefing on the Praesepian crisis. We ask that you forego your usual greetings." The message rang clearly in my mind and reminded me of Sirius's message. El and I smiled fondly at each other and turned our attention to the Council.

"What little information we have suggests that a besieging force has taken over the entire Praesepian government," Liberace began. "They have some type of shield that is preventing our telepaths from learning more. This shield is also preventing the Council from teleporting you to Praesepe. May we suggest your immediate departure on a starship scheduled to launch within the hour?"

Nandia and I had faced a similar crisis during our mission to Geasa. There we discovered, during our first meal in a streetside café, that copper-rich foods temporarily neutralized the city's zinc's disruptions to our dowsing. Further testing with our pendulums revealed that these same zinc deposits were interrupting both telepathy and teleportation.

"Have you checked to see if some type of zinc shielding is being used on Praesepe?" I asked the Council.

"It is quite possible," replied an extremely tall Elder

who looked reptilian. “We have no way of determining that, but perhaps you could make use of your dowsing skills to confirm your hypothesis.”

From its nest on my belt, I extracted my pendulum and began dowsing. I always begin my practice with a few deep breaths to connect my body, mind and spirit/soul. Then I mentally affirm, “I dowse impeccably for the greater good of All That Is.”

Dowsing is a tool that can be used to tap into the infinite library of information accessible within the inner dimensions of the Self. It trains the conscious mind to frame questions that must be answered with either a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ response. Effective dowsing requires setting aside rational analysis and emotional attachments when exploring a problem. An ages-old discipline, it proves to be quite helpful when learning to merge the intellect with the intuition.

Standing in the Council chambers, I started with my pendulum hanging in its neutral stopped position. Then I mentally asked, “Are the disruptions to telepathy and teleportation on Praesepe the result of the presence of zinc?” My pendulum immediately began swinging in a forward-and-back motion, my ‘yes’ response that mimics the up and down affirmative nod we humans so often use.

My pendulum’s negative response is a side-to-side motion that mimics our negative shake of the head. Early in my training, I had programmed my subconscious to settle on these simple signals, easy to remember. Other dowers prefer different signals, but mine leave my conscious mind free to watch for any subtle expectations or judgments that may intrude and interrupt my accuracy.



So, my Inner Self had indicated that on Praesepe, telepathy was being blocked by some kind of advanced zinc-disruption field technology.

I puzzled over this news. Did our earlier discovery of zinc's disruption to telepathy and teleportation prompt Praesepe's besiegers to develop a zinc shield? Did they know of copper's effectiveness as an antidote? But even more disturbing was why they would even want to invade Praesepe.

Setting these questions aside, I pressed on with a final question. "Can we neutralize this disruption by broadcasting the frequency of copper to Praesepe using a radionics instrument?" Again, I received a positive response.

Agoragon, perhaps the most beloved of my teachers, taught me about radionics, a science based on the simple fact that every element, every type of life, every organ in the body vibrates to its own unique electromagnetic frequency. For countless centuries dowsing has been used to identify these frequency rates. Radionics instruments can be calibrated to different rates and then used to transmit frequencies or create remedies that can be ingested orally.

Science has yet to measure the subtle emanations of energy used in the practice of radionics. Agoragon helped me learn that ill health is a result of blockages to the body's natural flow of subtle energies. These blockages are caused by distorted thinking, trauma, or even suppressed desires or emotions. A radionics frequency sends an electromagnetic signal into the energy field, dissipating the blockage and restoring the body's natural, healthy flow of energy. As the energy field recovers its balance, mental, emotional

and physical imbalances ease and healing is accelerated in the body.

I knew the radionic frequency rate for copper and knew we could radionically transmit it to Praesepe. My hope was that this would restore a telepathic connection with Nandia.

Agoragon used to say that while radionics is indeed a powerful healing tool, it cannot hold a candle to the unlimited power of the human brain when merged with the spirit/soul mind. But, until we as a species learn and trust the incredible creative power of consciousness, radionics serves quite a useful purpose.

Although I assumed that Council members had telepathically tuned into my testing, still, I verbally summarized my findings. "Testing indicates that the intruders are using some type of zinc shielding that disrupts telepathy. I also find that we can neutralize that shield by broadcasting the frequency for copper to the planet. I will need a radionics instrument and the celestial coordinates of Praesepe relative to where we are. I have the equipment and frequencies we need at my home."

"We can supply your needs from here," the reptilian Elder offered. "I recommend that we order what is needed immediately." The rest of the Council Elders readily agreed.

A young courier brought in a folding table. He was followed by a team carrying a radionics instrument, a power supply and a copy of a universal rate book. After setting up the equipment, I dialed in the frequency rate for copper. All that was needed were the celestial coordinates for Praesepe, which a second courier handed to me on a small slip of paper.

I placed the note listing the coordinates into the instrument's receptor-well and activated a series of switches that allowed it to transmit copper's frequency to the planet. I checked with my pendulum to determine the optimum broadcast time.

I addressed the Council. "After seven minutes, we will find out whether my dowsing was accurate. If so, the intruders' zinc shielding will have been neutralized."

As the minutes counted down, everyone agreed that I should be the one to telepathically connect with Nandia and find out what she needed to deal with the crisis. Several wanted to know the identity of Praesepe's besiegers. As the courier checking his watch nodded, I began breathing in a deep, connected rhythm. I closed my eyes and imagined Nandia waving to me from Praesepe's surface. I focused on her eyes and listened. Suddenly a surprised "Oh!" came back to me. It was Nandia's voice. I sent her the message that I was in the Grand Council chambers with Dunstan and Elli.

"What a relief that you've managed to penetrate the zinc shielding, Bearns," she responded, using the familiar nickname I'd been given at birth. I could make out a vague and intermittent mental image of Nandia, as if she were shrouded in banks of billowing gray clouds. "We're surviving a state of siege here, but only just. Could use your help," she said. "Bring Dunstan and Elli and a radionics instrument. These cretins from the planet Erylia have confiscated my copper. I'm in the city of Braeoon and will watch for you at the entrance to the Braeoon Gardens. How soon can you get here?"

I needed a suitcase, or preferably a backpack, to carry the equipment. This I requested of the Council and then asked, "Can you teleport the three of us together?" After a moment's consultation together, they agreed they could, although it would test the limits of their combined abilities.

"We've heard that the Erylians are suffering some type of epidemic that has hit their younger generations," Liberace said. "We can explore that further from here. Meanwhile, the equipment should be packed up and ready to go within the quarter hour. However it would be wise for you continue broadcasting the copper frequency for as long as possible. We can certainly feel the easing of the Erylian shielding."

"We can be there in fifteen minutes," I telepathed to Nandia. "Send a mental image of the entrance to Braeoon Gardens."

I looked to El and Dunstan to make sure they were telepathically tuned in and then closed my eyes. Immediately I saw a broad pathway spanned by a long, wrought-iron archway. It was overgrown with flowering vines bursting with bright orange blossoms. A few solitary people walked beneath this structure, despite the beauty of a day only occasionally shadowed by bright, cumulus clouds gently rolling across the rose and blue tinted Praesepian sky.

This rare color would aid us when visualizing our landing zone. Opening our eyes at the same time, El and Dunstan nodded that they had captured the target image and were ready to travel. I indicated to the Elders that we were prepared for departure.

Liberace telepathed that the Council needed only a few moments more to complete the gathering of our

supplies. I turned to El and properly greeted her. As we warmly held each other, she informed me that she had once been a Council member many generations past. Then I recalled our time together on Aesir and realized that El's prescient wisdom and vast knowledge of the galaxy added up a connection with the Grand Council. I was about to apologize for my short-sightedness when Dunstan joined in our hug.

"Aye, 'tis grand ta lay me eyes on ya once again, Laddie, so 'tis," he crowed. "And what rancorous burdens have ya' been layin' on the fair Nandia's shoulders since our last troubles, ya malingerin' minnow?" We all laughed at the prospect of a new mission together.

Only years after our assignment to Geasa did Nandia and I learn that the Council had sent abundant funds and staffing to Dunstan who had chosen to remain behind. There he established school for young, homeless survivors of the Saragalla epidemic. It was only then that I finally discovered that Dunstan was also a former Council member.

El interrupted these musings to remind me that Nandia's copper had been confiscated. After I relayed this to the Council, Liberace informed us that they were providing half dozen copper amulets and medallions. The spare metal could come in handy, especially if we ran into the same kind of troubles we had encountered in Geasa. There we were unable to use our telepathic and teleporting abilities until Dunstan had discovered a hidden source of the rare and proscribed metal. And for that, he had been imprisoned in a foul dungeon until Nandia and I rescued him.

A courier rushed in carrying a backpack. I checked

that power supply, rate book, copper baubles and radionics instrument were safe and secure. There was also a bag containing a generous supply of gold coins — the Council's characteristic method of providing funds that could easily be converted into local currencies. After shouldering the pack, I turned to El and Dunstan and held out a hand to each of them. We formed a triangle and smiled at each other. I felt as worry-excited as a small child stepping onto a spinning merry-go-round.

Staring intently at the three of us, the Elders suddenly disappeared, replaced by a familiar spiraling of white light behind my eyes. The next moment a feeling of weightlessness overtook me, and I mentally heard Elli say, as if far off in the distance, "Let's be away to Praesepe and find Nandia."