

I've read many a story of our world in its past, before it was reformed into what it is now, the world was a mess of forests, jungles, oceans, snowy tundra, deserts and mountains, all spread across the world. There was no balance between these biomes and their separation from one another, deserts would freeze over, tundra would melt from too much heat, forests would flood over from ocean water and massive volcanic mountain ranges jutted out in the middle of jungles, causing nothing but destruction to its ecosystem.

The current ruling goddess of our world, Goddess Vivian put an end to this hardship by splitting the world into equal pieces, dedicating each section to a single biome, a plan that took years of preparation and meticulous planning to put into action. I was born into this new world, I have always lived in the jungle with the rest of the Rainforest Elves and it is an absolutely lovely home, but whenever I read about other lands, their environments, their cultures, the things that are unique to them and them only, I can't help but wonder what it would be like to travel the world. Someday, I want to go out there and see all there is to see!

"Flora! We received a letter addressed to you!" I hear my father call from the living room, I quickly jolt up from my chair and rush to see just what he's talking about.

"Who could possibly have sent me a letter?" I ask as I see my father, mother, and younger brother all huddled around the table, staring at a glowing blue piece of paper.

My eyes widen at the sight, before even opening it, I knew who the letter was from. I pick it up carefully off the table and open it up as I read it aloud.

"Greetings young one, I am aware that receiving a letter such as this one may feel quite shocking, but I have a message of utmost importance to relay to you. Many moons have passed in my time as a goddess, I have worked with many of the world's leaders in order to make executive decisions in how to use my power, but have not once had the aid of a counsel proper. While watching over the realm, I have caught wind of some of your ideas, your aspirations, and of course, your undying kind nature. Truth be told, I see a lot of myself in you, dear girl." I pause at that and smile a bit, to think that I of all people would catch the attention of the goddess already felt unreal to me, but to be told by her that she sees *herself* in *me*?! I'm shocked I can still keep my balance.

Everyone else is smiling happily, waiting in anticipation for me to read out more of the letter, I skim over the next sentence and let out a loud gasp, putting them in even more suspense.

"I don't think I've ever heard you gasp that loudly, what does it say?!" my mother asks, coaxing me to continue.

"I plan to come to your home later today to privately discuss some matters with you, your planned involvement in the upcoming Counsel of the Goddess will be an unusual one and I want to ensure that you'll be willing to participate in it. Signed, Goddess Vivian." Well, now my eyes are open wider than I knew they could get, I'm going to be a part of the counsel?! ME?!

An eruption of congratulation and excitement comes from my family and while I definitely share their excitement, there's a sense of dread that settles in after a few minutes. If I'm to be a part of the goddess's counsel I'll never be able to properly explore the world as I've always wished to. The members of the counsel are expected to live in the Tower of the Goddesses, a large building that has lived in the center of the world for as long as it's existed, the tower has only ever housed the goddesses and their elected counsel members, entry is forbidden to anyone else.

It is an honour to have this opportunity, don't get me wrong, but it will mean that I will never have the opportunity to follow the path in life I had already planned to follow... and I'm not certain if I'm willing to give that up so easily. My mind keeps circling back to one particular part of the letter *"I have caught wind of some of your ideas, your aspirations..."* Does that imply she's aware of my desire to see the world? Or could it be the more likely case, that I'm overanalyzing her choice of words in hopes I may get just what I desire... I suppose I'll have to wait until later today to find out.

I try to go through my usual daily motions, doing some reading, tending to some cleaning, cooking myself some food, but throughout all of it the stress of the goddess's upcoming visit starts to get to me, I have butterflies in my stomach and by the time I've sat down to eat the lunch I made for myself, I've developed a nasty head-ache.

"You're feeling quite overwhelmed right now, aren't you, hun?" I look up from my plate to see my mother with a concerned look on her face.

"I know I shouldn't be, but yes... I can hardly think straight, I'm just so worried that I'll disappoint her if I decline the position on the counsel, the last thing I'd want to do is upset a goddess!" a chill goes down my spine at the mere thought of it.

"I'm positive that Goddess Vivian will find a way to make things work out in a way that will make you happy, and if not, then that's no fault of yours. You're a free-spirited young lady, I'm certain that Vivian has noticed such, I'm certain everything will be fine."

I take a deep breath in and exhale slowly, feeling a bit of worry leave alongside the air. Mother was probably right, there's no reason for anything to go wrong, but I can't seem to shake the feeling that something will.

"Your father and I should get started on supper soon, would you mind cleaning the dishes quickly once you've eaten?" She asks as we both look towards the small pile of dishes from breakfast piled in the sink.

"Mhm! I can do that. You remembered to tell Arnold to rinse the syrup off of his plate, right?" my brother has a tendency to load his pancakes with syrup, and then place his plate face down on top of all the others, creating quite the mess.

"Yes, I helped him rinse it off." replies my mother, and thank goodness for that.

Cleaning the dishes goes by quite fast, and so does the rest of the evening surprisingly, my thoughts have shifted from dreadful to curious. Why did the goddess choose me? What is it that she truly sees in me? Is there anything I should ask her? Before I know it, I've spent two hours lost in thought, and my father calls out to tell the rest of us that dinner's ready.

As I get to the table and take my seat, I turn my knife over so it faces my plate, Arnold tends to place the knives on the table with the blade out away from the plate instead of inward towards it, I find it to be cute, so I never call him out on it. The food looks delicious, but the moment I go to serve myself some, there's a knocking on the door.

"Don't forget to invite her inside for dinner!" my father calls out to me as I stand to go answer the door.

"I won't, father." I respond with a playful eyeroll.

Gripping the doorknob, I immediately feel a sense of nervousness like no other. This is it Flora, just breathe.

As I open the door, I'm faced with none other than Goddess Vivian herself. I was aware that she was a tall woman, but I suppose I never figured she'd be taller than even my father. Her wavy blue hair nearly reaches the ground, its color is so unique and radiant.

"Greetings young one, it's a pleasure to meet you in person." She says to me in a soft, ethereal voice.

"It's lovely meeting you as well! Please, come in! We were just about to have dinner, we've set up a seat for you too, as we're certain your journey here was long and figured some time to relax may be nice." I respond, looking back to the table to see my father with a goofy smile on his face, giving me two thumbs-up.

"Oh my, I'm ever so grateful for such a kind offer, but I just ate prior to arriving here. Though it would be nice to sit down with you all, you seem to have quite the lovely family here, young one." I feel my cheeks flush a bit with embarrassment at her words... or perhaps it was due to my father's previous gesture.

"Of course, please make yourself at home." I reply as we both make our way towards the table.

"Welcome, Goddess Vivian, it's a pleasure to have you here." My mother says to her with a smile.

"Please, have a seat, relax for a while." My father follows up with, motioning to the chair he set up for her.

"Mommy, is she a real goddess?" I hear my brother Arnold whisper to my mom.

"Yes honey, she is." My mother replies.

"YOU'RE A REAL GODDESS?!" Arnold yells out to Vivian, causing both my mother and father to tense up a bit.

“Yes, young one, I am as much of a goddess as you are a charismatic young elf.” She responds, chuckling at him as she takes her seat.

While my parents chat with Goddess Vivian, I finish my food. I don’t seem to notice just how fast I’m eating it; I must be more excited right now than I had realized. Vivian seems to notice once I’ve finished my plate.

“Ah, I suppose you’re nearly ready for us to discuss why I’ve come here?” She asks, to which I nod.

“Let me just put away my plate and wash my hands.” I reply, as I excuse myself from the table to do just that.

“Of course, I’ll be outside for you when you’re ready.” She calls back to me as I’m already on my way to the washroom.

Once I’ve washed up, I make my way outside, sure enough Vivian is out there waiting for me.

“Lovely, you’re here! I don’t suppose you’d mind if we walk while we chat with one another? I truly love the jungle and wouldn’t mind a peaceful walk.” She tilts her head slightly in anticipation of my answer.

“Oh, of course! I tend to think better on walks anyways.” I reply, and just like that we begin to make our way through the town at a relatively nice pace.

“The first question I have for you, dear Flora, is this: how much do you know about the Counsel of the Goddess?” she asks, looking down toward me.

“Most everything there is to know about it... I’ve always been quite interested in the goddesses and their ways of life, and there are many good books documenting them that I’ve read through in my spare time.” I say, looking up to Vivian who seems impressed, nearly shocked.

“Well in that case I suppose I shall cut to the chase. Often times schools will send out documents with information about graduating students that are sent to me to read. Yours is one that has definitely stuck out to me as having traits desirable for a member of the counsel. However, I must admit, it’s not easy to travel when you’re in the counsel, especially during times grand decisions must be made and I am well aware that would prove to be difficult for you. This leads me to a proposition I have that could allow you to join the counsel as well as travel the world as you’ve always desired.” I listen to Vivian’s words intently as she speaks and am filled with a sense of intrigue by them.

“You have my attention.” I say to her, eager to hear more.

“I wish for my counsel to have one representative from each region, however, many counsels of the past that have tried this have ended up in chaos and dismay, which is why I wish to ask you the ultimate favour of travelling the world to find someone from each region, and bring together a counsel of not random individuals, but one of friends. My hope is that in having all of the members know one another as friends, the decision-making process will consist of like-minded people and logical debates, as opposed to arguments and anger overtaking the discussion room.” Vivian looks at me with a serious expression on her face, “Flora, do you think you can fulfill this request of mine?”

“Absolutely! I would love to help put a counsel together!” I reply, I can feel the excitement radiating from my body.

“In that case, I bestow upon you this gem.” She says, before handing me a small gemstone. “You can use it to contact me whenever you need to, I suggest you take some time to prepare yourself for your journey, but once you are ready, please contact me with it, so we may go over all of the details involved at the Tower of the Goddesses.” Vivian requests with a smile.

“Of course! I look forward to seeing you again!” I say to her, smiling as I look at the small blue gem resting in the palm of my hand.

“Likewise. I suppose that marks the end of our meeting, would you like me to accompany you on your way home, or would you like some time to process what we’ve discussed?” Vivian asks me, tilting her head slightly as she waits for a response.

“As nice as your presence is, the latter does sound like the best choice for me at the moment.” I answer, hoping it doesn’t offend her at all.

“I had a hunch that would be your decision, best of luck on your way back then! Have a lovely rest of your night! I am excited to hear from you again.” Vivian says, before giving me a quick hug and flying away gracefully through the night sky.

I suppose that makes it official... I am the first member of the new counsel of the goddess! Me! Flora Wingston! I've so many thoughts flying through my head in regards to the whole situation, but only one of them is clear: I'm going to get out there and see the world sooner than I had thought!