

# Quest of the Counsel

I've read many tales of our world's past, what once was a land of interconnected biomes that threatened to destroy one another was eventually reformed to what it is now by the goddess herself, ensuring the safety of all the beings who reside within it. Now, every biome of our world has a dedicated segment of the planet to call its own. One ocean, one desert, one tundra, and, where I live, the one and only rainforest in the world.

I'm a jungle elf, one of the many races living within this world, and as grateful as I am to have grown up in such a rich and vibrant area, I can't help but wonder what's beyond my home land. Ever since I was a young girl, I've wanted to travel the world and experience all that it has to offer... Now that I'm nearing graduation, I hope to go down a career path that'll let me do just that.

"Flora, Flora, Floraaaa!! Wake up! There's a letter for you! Mom and Dad want you to come out and see it, come on!" I jolted awake at the sudden excitement and looked over to see my brother, Arnold looking giddy as can be.

"Can you go tell Mom and Dad that I'll be out in a minute?" I ask with a yawn, my voice still drowsy.

"Okay! Super speed!" Arnold says, dashing out of my room. How anyone can have that much energy at 8 in the morning will always be a mystery to me.

I look over to my desk and notice my chair still pulled out and my geography book still open on my desk. I must have been in a rush to get to sleep. I skim through it briefly before placing it back on my bookshelf and getting changed.

Once dressed, I make my way to the living room with haste, curious to see what all the excitement Arnold had earlier was about. Once there, I look to see my mother sitting out on the couch with a cup of tea, as well as my father with a cup of coffee in his hand and Arnold sitting on his lap.

“What’s all this fuss about a letter?” I pause and take a look at the excited expression on my mother’s face, she looks over to my father who has quite the look on his face as well. Finally, my eyes land on his outstretched hand, held within it is a glowing, blue envelope.

My. Jaw. Dropped. Not everyone knows what a glowing letter like this means, but my parents and I certainly do. There is only one being, one entity that has ever been known to send letters with this property: our world’s goddess.

“Is... is that truly addressed to me?” I ask, hardly able to comprehend the reality of the events playing out in front of me.

“I can’t say I’ve ever met another Flora Wingston, pretty darn sure it’s yours, kiddo.” my father replies, still holding out the envelope for me to take.

As I grab and open the envelope, I immediately take out the folded paper within it. My eyes can’t help but glance towards the signature at the bottom. Sure enough “Goddess Vivian” is written in a gorgeous cursive font at the end of the letter. My eyes go wide, the excitement and wonder I feel in this moment are just as overwhelming as the anxiety and nervousness accompanying it.

I take a deep breath in, looking to both of my parents as I mentally prepare to read the contents of the letter aloud. Just breathe, Flora. Just breathe.

“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 and I have worked with many of the world’s leaders in order to make executive decisions on how to better the lives of this realm’s inhabitants. That being said, in all my time as a goddess, I have lacked the aid of a proper counsel. While watching over the realm, I have also been searching for potential candidates for the next Counsel of the Goddess, and this searching has led me to you, dear Flora.”

I can hardly believe my eyes. I’ve read all about the Counsel of the Goddess, a legion of hand-picked individuals who are all brought together to live within the Tower of the Goddess in order to help the goddess in a plethora of ways.

“I’ve caught wind of your ideas, your beliefs and your aspirations from many sources I have that know of you. You have been described to me as nothing but kind, hard-working and ambitious. I plan to come to your home later this evening to discuss some matters with you privately. 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.”

My parents applaud me as I finish reading, I play into it and bow. It’s smiles all around, but the one on my face is forced. I don’t want to disappoint the goddess, but to spend the good majority of my time in the Tower of the Goddess, to have to report there whenever an issue arises... It’d make experiencing what this world has to offer nearly impossible. Did she truly think this through and choose me, or has there been a mistake? My mind starts to race with thousands of worries and fears, none of which I’m ready to face.

“Daddy, can we make pancakes now?” Arnold asks, briefly snapping me out of my panic.

“Of course, we can bud, good job being patient.” Father replies, as the two of them go off to the kitchen.

I excuse myself to my room after the both of them leave, sit down on my bed, and stare at my map on the wall, specifically at the small bit of it dedicated to the Tower of the Goddess in its center, compared to the vastness of the rest. I place the paper back in the envelope and put them both onto my nightstand.

The next little while of mine is spent staring out my window, trying to take in the fresh air and relax myself. After not too long, I hear a knock on my door, followed by my mom cracking it open a bit.

“May I come in?” she asks, politely.

“I suppose some company wouldn’t hurt.” I reply, still staring out through the window.

“I can tell you’re feeling stressed about the letter. It’s okay to say no if you want to.” she tells me in a reassuring tone.

“I guess... but still, the fact that she thought I’d want to do this is just so confusing to me.” I give a bit of a sigh as I finish speaking.

“Well, perhaps there’s more to this than what you’ve considered thus far, after all, the goddess stated she knows of your ambitions. Maybe there’s a chance that both of you will be able to work something out, a compromise so to speak.” my mother’s words send me into a state of consideration. The point she just raised is one I never would have considered otherwise.

“That’s a good point... I feel foolish for not thinking of it.” I respond, though speaking more to myself than to her.

“Well, I hope it helps to ease your worries a bit knowing that option’s on the table... speaking of which so are the pancakes when you’re ready for some.” she says with a laugh.

I give a bit of a chuckle and thank her before she leaves the room. I wasn’t expecting my perspective to change so drastically from her words. The anxiety is still there, yes, but now I’m filled with curiosity more than anything else.

After a brief (but delicious) pancake breakfast, my father walks by, noticing me, he gets a bit of a worried look on his face.

“Hey, your mother told me that you were feeling stressed about seeing the goddess later today, is there anything I can do to help you feel better about it?” he asks, putting down the hamper of laundry he was carrying.

“Mother and I already had a bit of a talk about it and I’m feeling much better than I was before.” I respond with a smile, a genuine one this time around.

“Oh, I’m pleased to hear that! By the way, once you’re done eating, if you wouldn’t mind cleaning the rest of the dishes from breakfast, that would be a huge help. Your mother and I were planning to cook a nice dinner for when the goddess gets here after she’s back from work.” Father’s always been quite the passionate cook, he’ll take any excuse he can to prepare a fancy meal.

“I’ll get started on that right now! You made sure to help Arnold with his plate, right?” I ask, Arnold has a tendency to load his pancakes up with syrup and then place his plate face down on top of the rest of the dishes in the sink, causing quite the mess.

“I made sure to help him out, don’t worry.” my father says before picking the hamper back up again and heading down the hall.

The rest of the day goes by as normal, cleaning the dishes, watering the houseplants, and taking some time to pick out an outfit for later, as well as digging out makeup from a small box in my cupboard. Rarely do I wear any in my day-to-day life, but I do enjoy wearing it on fancy occasions like this one, that being said, most of what’s in this box is likely years old.

Once mother comes home from work, she offers to do my makeup for me, an offer I am always willing to accept, as my hands tend to get shaky when I try doing it myself.

It seems like before I know it, the evening arrives. I’m waiting in my room in anticipation, to say I was reading a book while doing so wouldn’t be a lie, but to say I had comprehended any of it would be a different story. My mind was too focused on the

goddesses visit. Father claims to have heard that despite being the deity she is, she's truly a lovely lady, and very down-to-earth too. I certainly hope that's the case, I wouldn't want to accidentally come off as informal at any point tonight.

"Flora! Someone's at the door for you!" I hear my mother call from across the house.

As I make my way over to the door, I can't help but feel butterflies in my stomach, I'm really doing this. I'm answering the door for the goddess herself and inviting her into our home for a meal. No pressure. I reach my hand out to the doorknob and slowly turn it. This is it, Flora. Just breathe.

As I opened the door I took in the sight of the goddess, 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, I can't help but admire its unique colour for a moment before she begins to speak, snapping me out of my awe.

"Hello there, dear Flora. 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. Shall we have our discussion now?" she asks, looking down and tilting her head slightly.

"Could we offer you a meal first? I know your journey here must have been quite the long one, and we wanted to ensure you have some time to rest if you need to." I nervously look to the kitchen; my father gives me a dorky smile and a 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.

“After you, then.” I say, opening the door further and holding it for her. My father comes by to usher her to the table and I close the door to follow.

“Welcome, Goddess Vivian, it’s a pleasure to have you here.” my mother says to her with a smile on her face.

“Mommy, is she a real goddess?” I hear Arnold whisper to my mom from across the table.

“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, it’s true. I am as much of a goddess as you are a charismatic young elf.” she responds, chuckling at him as she takes her seat.



Dinner goes quite well, father could not have been more correct about how down-to-earth the goddess is, as she and my parents ended up having a fairly long conversation about lotuses of all things. Before too long, I've finished my meal entirely, Goddess Vivian seems to notice this, and shifts her gaze towards me.

"As much as I hate to cut this short, your daughter and I have some important matters to discuss now. Are you ready, young one?" the goddess's question is one I'm not certain how to answer truthfully... *Am I ready?*

"I suppose I am, yes, let me just clear off the table and wash my hands." I go to pick up plates, as I normally do, until my mother interjects.

"I can clear the table off tonight, hon, no worries." she says, taking my plate and utensils.

"Oh- thank you, mother!" I say to her, before getting up to go to the washroom.

"I will be waiting outside for you, Flora." the goddess says, excusing herself from the table.

After washing up, I meet with the goddess outside. I feel oddly at ease in her presence, though that could simply be due to how calming it is outside.

"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 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.

“I suppose that means I can cut to the chase. I’ve visited with various people from around the world, whether it be teachers, librarians, or employers, people who tend to know the citizens of their respective areas quite well, to ask if they had anyone in mind to nominate for this position. Of them all, you’ve stuck out to me the most, a young girl with a strong sense of self, and adventure in her heart. Does that sound right?”

“I suppose so, yes.” I reply, sheepishly.

“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?”

I'm frozen in shock momentarily, I've just been given the opportunity of a lifetime, the ability to travel the world, meet new people, and help the goddess out in the process, it would be foolish to say anything but yes!

"I would love to help put the 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 using it, so we may go over all of the details involved at the Tower of the Goddesses." Vivian requests with a smile.

"Absolutely! I'm honoured to have your trust in this quest." I say to her, the grin on my face is wider than it's ever been before.

"I suppose that marks the end of our meeting then. Have a lovely rest of your night, Flora. I look forward to hearing from you!" 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! 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!