

## Meeting of Fates

The world of Hilm is broken. And it's not just the cataclysm that destroyed the entire world over a thousand years ago. Magic went wild where the simplest spell could utterly destroy you, entire countries, way of life for endless people ruined, destroyed, land masses sunken into the ocean, leaving only island nations that arose out of the ashes. But also those very countries. In fighting, international affairs, Gods that 'watch' over others, but do they really? My people, Tengus, an anthropomorphic black feathered crow and raven species have been at the bottom of the barrel, and that barrel is also empty. I earned to do something like my older siblings of my first clutch, Convince who went off on adventure, Mia who accompany Tostay to study in the capital to become a guard back here in Gness, the biggest city on the coast Arckrull sea and the massive Jesmund desert. But right now, I'm trapped supporting my blind Mother and help raising the three surviving younger brothers and sister from the third clutch. The only survivor from my clutch, it's defined who I am. A survivor. But little did I know that today is the day that I would stop surviving and start my way on thriving. Who am I you wonder? My name is...

"Mira!" yells a black feathered tengu child that jumps onto a blue feathered Tengu's chest.

"Huh! I'm under attack! Help!" Mira exclaims falling out of her poorly constructed bed with a thud "Wha! Oh my God! What is it you little shit? I was having such a nice dream where I wasn't here."

A female tengu, the same age as the one that jumped on Mira's chest, "Ooooo. I'm going to tell Mom you swore!"

Mira quickly knocks the haze of sleep from her mind, "Huh, what? No, no, no. I didn't swear. Adorable need to get your ears checked," she says, hear feathers rising.

Adorable puffs her feathers, "I heard it and I'm telling."

"I heard it too!"

"Shut up, no one asked you Gawds. And why did you jump on my chest?!"

"To wake you."

"You could have poked me."

"No," Gawds says, shaking his head.

"But why?"

"That's no fun."

"But that doesn't make any sense."

"But I heard you swear, I'm telling Mom!" exclaims Adorable, rushing off.

"God damn it!" exclaims Mira.

"I didn't do anything!" responds Gawds.

"I wasn't speaking about you," she huffs, getting up, rushing out of her room. The ramshackle of a house made from whatever the family could fine has some level of competition construction with some well-defined rooms and shutters to keep out the sand when the wind blows.

“Mom! Mira swore!” exclaims Adorable, the little Tengu getting right behind a middle aged black feathered Tengu, with some faint hints of blue under the right light. She’s currently on the wood stove preparing with an iron pan some breakfast, moving about with ease.

“She’s a big fat liar! Liar I say!” exclaims Mira, getting up behind Mom, “Don’t believe a word she says.”

Without looking, Mom baps Mira on the break, “Hey!” exclaims Mira.

“Mira, what did I say about swearing and lying about it?” asks Mom.

Mira rubs her beak, “Not to do it.”

“You need to watch that tongue of yours, otherwise people will judge you harshly.”

“Oooh! You got in trouble with Mom!” exclaims Gawd.

A second tongue boy the same age as Gawds and Adorable says, “What? I didn’t do nottin!”

Gawds turns to him, “I wasn’t talking about you, but Mira.”

“Don’t say my name then,” says Ooh.

“I didn’t”

“Yes, you did.”

“Did not.”

“Did too!”

Mom speaks up in a firm voice, “Children!”

Everyone in the room including Mira freezes and turns to her, speaking in unison, “Yes Mom?”

“Breakfast is ready!” she turns around, revealing her scared visage, claw marks across her face, which brings a pit to Mira’s stomach every time, a flash of the moment that took her Mom’s vision away, it fills her with a mix of sadness and burning rage, but it quickly subsides with a trained acceptance of “It is what it is” mentality.

“What did you make?” asks Mira, as she moves to help but is quickly bapped on the beak.

“It’s fried worm with a hint of seed salt,” says Mom, moving to the kitchen table that has three tall chairs for the younger siblings that scramble to get in.

“Mom...” she says rubbing her beak, “You could let me help.”

“I’m blind not helpless. I can get this,” she chirps, serving the food with a mystic ability, Mira reluctantly sitting in her spot.

“I just wanted to help...”

She smiles, “I know and you do. With your father out at the big mine, I’ve been relying on you to make sure things get done around here. And the extra work you do to earn money is a God send.”

She huffs, “They’ve done nothing, it was me! ME I say! I’ve worked to help.”

“Mira, relax, it's only a turn of phrase.”

“I know that,” she huffs.

“Speaking of supporting, do you work today?”

Mira is already deep into eating her breakfast, slurping up a worm, “Ahhh yeah...”

“Mira, don’t talk with your mouth full.”

She swallows, “My mouth wasn’t full.”

Mom baps her on the nose.

“Hey!”

“Don’t lie to your Mother.”

“I’m not... I’m sitting down. Hehehehehe.”

Another bap, “Mira please.”

She rubs her beak, “Sorry,” she says solemnly.

“Could you stop over at your Aunt Chirpy’s place?”

“Stop over there? But why? She’s just so... over the top with *everything*. A one-minute visit will just turn into an hour and that’s just listening to her title, getting into the place.”

“You know my older sister has always been the one to take responsibility. The title helps her establish herself with the nobles.”

“Psh, what do the nobles do for us? Nuttin.”

“Nothing! Nothing! Not a god damn thing!” yells out Gawd.

Adorable says, “Ohhh, you swore.”

Ooh responds, “I didn’t!”

Adorable and Gawd turn to Ooh, “Not you!”

Mira sighs, “What did you need Mom?”

She smiles, pulling out a piece of paper scrolled up and tied with string, “Take this to her. It’s a letter to your father and she’ll make sure he gets it.”

Wide eyed she responds, “But I was going to help you write it.”

“You worked late last night, and the next convoy to the open pit mine departs soon.”

“We helped!” says Mira’s siblings.

She turns to them tilting her head to the side, “Help? Can any of you even read let alone write.”

“We can!” exclaims Adorable.

“Yup!” says Ooh.

“You helped teach us,” puffs out Gawd.

Mom chuckles, “It’s alright. You’ve been working hard, and helping me with the little ones.”

“We aren’t little!” they exclaim.

“So, could you do that?”

With a defeated sigh, “Of course. I’ll do it. Whatever you need of me Mom, I’m your blue bird to do it.”

“I know you are, I can count on you,” she replies, leaning over giving a few playful preen kisses.

“Mom! Not in front of the others,” she says, huffing, weakly trying to push her away.

“Come on, you’re never too old to be preened by your Mom.”

She fluffs her feathers, "I'll take the scroll over to her now."

"Already?"

"I finished breakfast."

"Every last worm?"

"Mom, I could never let a single spec of your cooking escape me. Especially a worm."

"Alright," she says, handing her the scroll, "Good luck. And try not to have her hold you too long."

"I'll try."

"Bye Mira!" yells her siblings.

"Don't get lost!" yells Ooh.

"Buy me some seeds!" yells Gawd.

"Yeah! I want seeds too!" exclaims Adorable.

"I'm not going shopping. I have no money for seeds. I need to work first."

"After work then seeds!"

"Yup! That is what I heard."

"I didn't say that!"

"You didn't say you wouldn't!" exclaims Ooh.

"You just said you had no money," says Adorable

"Not till work!" adds in Gawd.

Mira sighs, looking to her Mother, who smiles brightly with a sense of pride, "I'll be back soon."

"Take care, love you," says Mom.

"Love you too," she says, draping herself in a simple battered cloak, heading out. She doesn't get more than a minute away from the house before dodging behind a building, unwrapping the paper, taking a look, seeing a poorly written letter from Mom to Weave.

She sighs, pulling out a fine charcoal tip pen, "*Dad will never be able to read this Tengu scratch.*" She writes a translation of the letter to the best of her ability on the page, "There, that should do it, just needs, 'And Mira has been the very best and deserves anything she wants when you get back' now it's perfect," she grins, rolling the parchment back up.

Mira maneuvers through the slums that go right up to Gness' protective walls. The gates open but guarded, passing her field of view in the distance, "*One day. I'll go through it and they'll step aside.*"

She reaches one building that stands out from the rest, an upside-down hull of a small ship that has been retrofitted to serve as a home/townhall for the slums. Standing outside are two tengus in battered leather armor, armed with dull daggers. One steps in front of her exclaiming, "Halt! Who goes there?" he asks, staring her down.

She sighs, "You know who I am. I'm here to see my aunt. Now let me in so I can deliver this to her."

"A message to the great Chirpy you say?" he asks, leaning in close, "Let me see it."

"No, let me in."

No. I see the goods or no entry.”

She grumps, “I don’t have time for this.”

The other Tengu steps up, “Do you think you can get past us?” he asks, pulling out his dagger and licking it, “Ah! Ah!” he squawks, cutting his tongue.

The other Tengu sighs, “This is the third time this week you’ve done that. Stop it!” he exclaims.

“Buhh iht kuhl!” the Tengu responds.

Mira rolls her eyes, “Can you let my aunt know I’m here to see her? It’s her niece, on behalf of her younger sister.”

The first Tengu turns his attention back to her, “I shall check... and see if she’s free to see you. Perhaps she is? Perhaps not. She’s a *very* busy and important Tengu.”

“Yeah, yeah, sure, whatever you say!”

“I warn you. She might not have time for the *common* folk,” he says, running off into the ship.

“Every goddamn time,” she rubs the bridge of her beak with her black scaled claws, not even acknowledging the cut tongued Tengu who tries to hold up his dagger ‘menacingly’ to her.

A little time passes before two Tengus step out, one blowing a horn, the other decreeing, after taking a very deep breath, “Behold and all bow down to the Chira the youthful, graceful, most beautiful, dazzling, bountiful, angelic avian, the wise, protectorate of Gness, Baroness of the Duchess of Jesmund desert, leader of the Raven Claw Tribe, keeper of the shinnies, lore keeper of all of the great and epic Tengu history, defender of the weak and innocent, smiter of evil, all knowing, all powerful,” the Tengu runs out of air, gasps and collapses to the ground, passing out.

The second Tengu steps out continuing without missing a beat, “Sole heiress to the intangible secrets of the universe, gatekeeper to the knowledge of the great cataclysm, slayer of the great Worm Gormack the insatiable Princess-queen her royal majesty and grace Pyiasa the 28th.”

A black feathered Tengu with little hints of blue only visible under the right light, her brown eyes lock onto Mira, her clothes that would be considered “Descent” to a commoner are the very best she has, “Mira! One of my favorite nieces! What can I do for you?!” she exclaims in a high-pitched voice, walking over to her with a practiced ‘elegance’.

“Hello Aunt Chirpy, how are you?”

“I am just wonderful, busy running the city,” she says, motioning to the slums outside the walls.

“I can see, and what a... wonderful job you are doing.”

“Thank you, now what can I do for you?”

“Mom wanted this letter on the next convoy to the open pit mines. It’s for Dad.”

“For Weave? And Mom couldn’t send me a letter?”

“You spoke just two days ago.”

“A lot can happen in two days.”

“I’m sure.”

“Oh let me tell you.”

“No, please.”

Chirpy grabs Mira by the hand, “Oh, but I insist. It’s best to be up to date with the happenings in the wider world.”

“Look I really need to make this quick.”

“I completely understand, it will only take a few minutes.”

With an exasperated look, she sarcastically says to no one, “Please kill me.” She’s yanked into the building, not departing till noon.

“And tell your mother she should come and see her again soon.”

Mira shoots her a look, “Aunt Chirpy, really?”

“I love talking to my sister, since Anna and Up left and Bob went you know...”

“Ah... uncle Bob, I miss him.”

A black feathered Tengu walks by saying, “I’m right here Mira.”

Mira turns to her, looking at the shady Tengu, “Not you uncle Bob, the *other* uncle Bob.”

“Oh. Stay out of trouble. I’m about to snag myself a job.”

“A job? Congrats!”

“Yup! But don’t tell anyone, it’s a secret,” he says, “Shhh,” he says, walking off.

Mira just stares at him, “Then why did you tell me... in *public*. Why is everyone so *stupid*. Is this what going to happen to me when I get older?” she remarks, making not halfway to her home when she hears a ruckus of a bunch of Tengus cheering and yelling.

“You can do it! Come on pecky!”

“No! Stingy can do it! Go stingy!”

“*Animal fighting again... Couldn’t they do something better with their time?*” Mira thinks, about to walk away when she feels something in the pit of her stomach. The same feeling every time she looks at Mom. She tenses, “*Something about this doesn’t feel right,*” she thinks, heading over to see a group of teenage Tengus in a circle around a dirt ring they made by digging into the ground. Within the ring is a chicken on one side and a black scorpion on the other. The moment Mira’s eyes lay upon the bug she felt something... new.

“*Save him. Save El Salvador.*”

Mira’s feathers ruffled, “What the fuck?” she exclaims.

“Hey, we’re playing here! Come on Stingy! I’ll earn a bag of seeds if you lose! Get eaten by pecky!”

“You can do it pecky!” exclaims another Tengu.

Mira tenses, looking at the helpless scorpion, “You can’t do this! It’s cruel!” she huffs, stepping in, breaking up the fight, the chicken taking the sudden break in the crowd to make a run for it.

“No Pecky! Come back!” exclaims one Tengu, running off after it. The others let out a groan of disappointment.

“We were having fun!” exclaims one.

“Having fun by watching an innocent get eaten is not right,” Mira exclaims getting over the scorpion.

“Says who?” puffs out one Tengu.

“Says Me! Mira Avriea!”

“So?!”

“Yeah so?”

One other Tengu steps in, “Ah guys that’s Chirpy’s relative. You don’t want to get her mad now?” cautioning his friends to step back.

They huff, “No... Dad would kill me.”

“Mom would defeather and then tar and feather me,” he remarks.

Mira stands her ground, “Go, shoo. Go be productive and do something for our people.”

“Oh yeah? And what are you doing?”

“Something, something great.”

“Yeah? Like what?”

“It’s too great for you to understand,” Mira retorts, staring down the kid who backs down,

“Not even worth it. The Kasatha are going to get you and punch you four times and then kick you twice! Come on guys, let's play bird’s call at my place,” he states, walking off.

Mira sighs, “That was something new... four times? They have those extra arms,” she remarks, shuddering. turning to the scorpion, “Now are you okay El Salvador?” she says, seeing he’s not there.

“Huh... must have run off. And why did I call it that? What a strange name,” she remarks, making it back home, “Mom! I’m home!” she calls out, but there is no answer, “Mom? Mom?” she asks looking around, “Ohh? Gawd? Adorable?” she calls out, finding no one. “Huh... perhaps they’re shopping. Another thing I’m not helping with. I’m so useless,” she remarks, heading into her room, “I should check if my chest pillows look good for tonight,” she remarks, heading back to her room, going to a box she has hidden away under the bed. There are two blue feathered ‘breasts’ made up completely of feathers that have fallen off naturally, “Not bad, needs a bit more work. I don’t understand it, but these really bring in the extra silver. Guess they like the ‘Blue Oasis’ with a pair of sand mounds,” she says, feeling a shiver run down her spine.

“Oh? What was that?” she spins around, ready for a fight, feathers becoming ruffled, “Who goes there?” she calls out, the tingle running along her shoulder. She jumps and turns her head to it, “Araghghaghaga!” she exclaims, the scorpion is right on her shoulder and it jumps and lands on her beak, claws clatterin in the air.

“What the fuck!” she exclaims, as the stinger comes right in between her eyes... the world goes dark.

“Huh? Wha? Ooohhh...” she says, looking into the endless dark blackness void, “Am I dead? Is this it? Taken out by a bug? And here I thought it always would have been a cat. Probably a black cat. That likes drugs and sex. Yup, ask for me, and they eat me out in not the good way,” she states.

“Finally... after so long, once again I’ve found someone to help me,” an ethereal female voice says that is omni-present.

“What the fuck!” she exclaims looking around frantically, but all she sees is shadows that shift and move, with a black void backdrop.

“Calm yourself.”

“Who are you? What do you want? If you want money, you’ve come to the wrong place, all you’d get out of me is practice”

“No, I am not here to rob you. I need your *help*.”

“Help? Who are you? What’s your name? I don’t help anyone for nothing. Especially some crazy voodoo shit of a voice that comes out of nowhere. You aren’t going to scare me with your oooOOoooOOoo shit. I grew up in the slums of Gnoss. I’ve *seen* things.”

“It’s difficult to talk. I can’t see.”

A pit forms in Mira’s stomach, “You’re blind?”

“In a way... I need your help.”

“What kind of help?”

“The kind that only you can do it, my chosen.”

“Chosen? This is not some hero rescuing the world from immortal danger now is it?”

“I... don’t think so. I need help to be free.”

“You’re imprisoned? What for?”

“I... can’t remember.”

“Can’t remember? I have an uncle in the slammer. He did some *crazy* shit to get in there. I mean really crazy shit. One day he was the greatest and best uncle there was. Next day, the entire town is talking about what he did to the previous mayor.”

“I will need your help, but first you need to get stronger.”

“Stronger? Look here creepy voice, I’m the strongest there is. None stronger than me. Mira, me, me, me Mira.”

“I will aid you. You will grow. Take good care of El Salvador. He will be the connection between us.”

“El Salvador? Oh, that scorpion?! That little shit stung me!”

“A connection must be made.”

“Connection? Can you do something that isn’t sting related?”

“Take care Mira, we will talk again once you’re stronger. Things will be known to you when you awake. Take care, and practice.”

“Wait. I didn’t agree to anything!”

“Take care.”

“Wait Goddamn it! You can’t do this to me!” she exclaims jumping up, Gawd jumps back from his hovering position over her, “Goddamn it! How many times I told you not to do that!” she exclaims.

Gawd grins, “You swore! I’m going to tell Mom!”

“No! I don’t need this!”

He starts to run.

“No stop damn it!” she exclaims, feeling something come over her, through her, a sense that *something* is happening, and the next thing she knew Gawd tumbles down face first into the ground.

“Gawd?” Mira says, taken back, approaching tentatively, feeling a pit form in her stomach, “Gawd? Oh, Gawd no,” she says, standing over him.

“I’m over here,” says Ooh.

“Not you!” exclaims Mira.

Gawd jumps “Huh, wha! What the fuck?!” he exclaims.

A sense of relief comes over Mira, “*What was that?*”

Ooh gasps, “You swore! I’m telling Mom!” says Ooh, running off.

“What? No! I didn’t!” says Gawd, chasing after him.

Mira feels a tingle on her shoulder, she jumps about to smack whatever it is off of her when she sees its the scorpion, “You!”

El Salvador clips his pincers.

“You did this?”

The scorpion shrugs.

“How are you shrugging? You don’t even have a neck.”

He shrugs.

“Damn it. So... I got power now?”

Pincher clicking.

Mira grins, “I got power... total and unlimited power!” she exclaims cackling manically.

Mom yells out, “Mira? Is that you?”

“Ah... yes Mom.”

“You’re not at work.”

“At work?” Mira looks outside seeing it's gotten dark.

“Oh shit! I’m late!” she exclaims, rushing to grab a bag to place her chest pillows in, “Letthalii is going to kill me, I was her opening dance tonight!” she squawks about to exit but stops dead in her tracks.

“Mira?” asks Mom.

“Yes Mom?”

“Not going to give your mother a peck before you leave?”

“Sorry Mom,” she says, moving to give her a peck, but gets a bap on the beak instead, “Hey, what was that for?”

“I heard that swear earlier.”

“Sorry... I will work on it. I promise.”

“Good,” says Mom, giving Mira a peck preen, and a big hug, “Take care, and good luck at work. That job at the docks must be very hard on your hollow bones. I know you’re always complaining about them.”

She smiles, “I do what I can Mom. Be seeing you.”

“Be seeing you too my little chick,” she replies.

Mira tenses, and departs thinking, *“Perhaps with this power I can find a way to heal you Mom... and help our people out of this hell hole.”*