

# 12

*-Liwayway-*

In the distance, Liwayway stared at the boy weeping in the shore. The waves rushed in, cradling him in a mother's embrace. Grey clouds rolled above, and droplets started to strike her. They formed rivulets and streams and miniature falls of water that trickled down from her hair, her face, and down to the grass.

She sighed, exhaling the pent-up weariness that had accumulated in her body. The weight of her task came crashing down along with the rain and she slumped and collapsed to the hard trunk of a tree. Then loneliness wormed its way into her heart in a pulsating pain and she groaned.

"Struggling, aren't we?" A voice reached her from behind along with a rush of saltiness and a breeze that danced eddies on her back.

She looked to see the deity, Magwayen, walking in the drizzle. As the drops flowed down from the branches of the trees, it merged into robes that clothed him.

"Yes. Is that what you would like to see?"

"No." Magwayen grinned. He held a hand to brush a tear from Liwayway's cheek. His fingers left a streak of refreshing coolness on her face. "Is that what you think of the deities?"

"Isn't it? We just want to live without worries. Yet the deities bring fire to burn our homes and storms to separate these people."

"Why are humans so... greedy?" Magwayen sighed. "You always want everything. Always wanting. A good, long life, sustenance, love. Humans call the storms a blight, a calamity, yet to me humans are the true calamities. You take and you take and you do not know that it brings you your own misfortune."

Liwayway saw not a twinge of irony in his eyes—they were as clear as the water that had just melted from the mountain's peaks—nor a hint of delight on his visage. His expression, the twist of his lips and the scowl in his brows, betrayed none of the cruel enjoyment at their woes that she had thought he would have had, but instead a touch of... disappointment?

"Who are you to say that?" Liwayway growled at him. "We are all just trying to live. Why should we not want for a good, long life?"

"A good life in exchange for the balance of nature? You do not know it but your *good life* would bring death to the very earth. Let me tell you what you are saying." Magwayen stepped away, and the drops of rain moved along with him. "Once, I still walked freely amongst the

humans, the ancestors of these tribes that now roam the waters. I called on the rain so that the earth can partake in the waters, I called on the storms and the floods so that the earth can be washed clean. But one of those humans, a trickster with a glib tongue, came to me and persuaded me that they also needed that power. They told me that they needed water to grow their plants and to quench their babes' thirst and that those from the rains and the rivers were not enough to sustain their people. So I, in my naivete, gave them a gift. A part of my own, from my own flesh I crafted an instrument that allowed them to talk with the wind and the rains and control it as I would."

"Then what happened?"

"At first, they used it as they said, and they prospered. They never were want of water, or of sustenance, and had a good life. But for humans, that was not enough. They realized that they could use the power as a weapon. They used it to enslave other humans and to clear the lands, using their control over the weather to force them down. And they prospered further." Magwayen touched his chin, as if in thought. "They had an even better life, they never had to worry nor wander far."

"Why did you not take it back then?"

"It was their choice. Perhaps I wanted them to realize the folly of their own ways."

"Then how did it end up like this?"

Magwayen paused. He moved closer and looked at her with a queer smile. "It was another human. One day, a woman from the tribes they had enslaved came to the shore. She let drift her child's corpse and returned it to my embrace. She begged the ocean for a chance to take revenge."

A chill settled on Liwayway, coursing up from her limbs to her head and she shivered.

"What did you do?" Her voice had thinned to a whisper.

"You see, her child had died of *thirst*. I took pity on her, and gave her her chance. From then on she became known as the *Bakunawa*. She took her revenge, and even now, she hounds the descendants of those people, bringing in the storms and forever cursing them with a life of running from island to island."

"How is that fair?" Liwayway asked. She locked gazes with Magwayen, though her arms and legs shook where she stood. Her tattoos flared to life, swimming under her skin, lines unravelling. Her flowing hair thickened into feathers, a crest of brown and white in her head.

"For humans, it might not be fair." Magwayen leaned back. The rain weakened into a gentle drumming, his robes melting into mist and fog. He started floating away. "But when did the earth care about fairness? It is up to you humans to fix it."

“But I don’t even know where to start! We can’t even find the *Bakunawa!*” Liwayway chased after him, but his figure disappeared into drops of water that clung to the branches and the leaves. His final words echoed in the trees.

“I’ve already told you everything you need to know on this journey. Finding it is the easiest part. What happens next is up to you. Who knows, you might gain the treasure to restore your own homeland.”

Liwayway looked to the sky. The rain had stopped. The sky had turned clear. She took a deep breath and walked down to the shore.

Notes:

This indeed does read like a repetition of a previous chapter in the 1st Act where the deity offers her the quest and she refuses. Perhaps it is because I am left with no other way to explain or set the stage for the next set of events which are a little bit more tense and action packed. If I were to go through these chapters again I will probably make the two parts play out slightly more different.