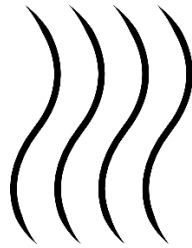


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about 3,000 words



## A CREATION STORY

by Joe Maginnis

### **Of the four strands of creation and the beginning of all things ...**

Before the beginning of time, there was eternal chaos with no beginning or end. How to describe such a thing without referencing principles of time or energy or here and there? The chaos had all of these things, and then it had none of them, and then it had some of them. Chaos was the wind and they were loose strands whirling and swirling about – never seeming to touch except for the occasional crash and recoil. Until, by some matter of chance, the chaos brought them together and spun them into thick yarn. Order emerged from chaos, momentary as it was. But the wind blew the strands apart, and again they were three disparate strands twirling and twisting about; fading into and out of existence.

But eternity is persistent. Countless more times, the chaos brought the strands back together; each time in a different pattern than the last. All times the result was the same: order flickered and faded back into chaos. All times but one, and one is all that matters in dealing with creation.

Mind was the missing strand that held the other three together. It came from the same place as the others – spat out from the winds of chaos into existence with no reason or purpose – but its presence was necessary so that these now four strands: time, power, dimension, and mind, could together weave the fabric of the universe. From that fabric all things were made, and shape was given to the heavens. Order prevailed. Even the raging winds of chaos could not tear it apart anymore.

### **Of the Astari and the creation of the new world ...**

Along with the heavens were born the Astari: the first minds. They were made from the same fabric as the universe itself, but their minds and wills were independent. And with their individual wills, they each commanded their own share of the universal power: all the energy that was brought forth in the moment of creation. Each of the Astari had full autonomy over their respective share of the power, but once their share was fully spent, their minds would fade forever.

Not wanting to spill their allotments of power, the Astari first dwelt in a darkness and silence that lasted many millennia. The darkness persisted until one, who was called Solas, thought to use his power to bring forth light into the heavens. He shone beautifully of green and yellow, and his light stretched far and filled the other Astari with inspiration. Many followed him, and soon the heavens were filled with torches of various colors.

Years passed before another, who was called Gala, had the thought to use her power to bring forth the first worldly material – physical substance to fill the otherwise empty heavens. She formed metals and other elements, and out of them she made for herself a body to live in. The other Astari saw her and found her beautiful to behold. Many followed her, and soon the heavens were filled with bodies of various shapes.

Still, many of the Astari waited in the dark corners of the heavens for a new inspiration. Among these was one called Evena. She wielded only a small share of the

universal power, but she was gifted with a creativity that other Astari lacked. And as she looked on from where she rested at the disparate bodies and lights throughout the heavens, she was overcome by a vision of a new world – one made from the materials of Gala and lit by the torches of Solas. It would be a world for her and the other Astari to live in and enjoy until the end of their days, and it would fill them with a greater purpose beyond their individual ambitions.

So great was the creativity of Evena that no single Astari would be capable of constructing the world she dreamt of by their individual power – especially not Evena, who was weak among her peers. So, she came out from the shadows of the heavens to recruit others to her cause. Coming before them each individually, she proclaimed, “Alone, we are left to burn for a lifetime until we fade from this world forever. But together, we can achieve greater things. We can escape the isolation of the heavens and live on, unified, in a new world of our making.” Then, she described her world in greater detail, referencing earth and sea; peak and valley. Many of those who heard her were wary at first. But one by one, they were compelled to take part in her plan. For Evena was persuasive in her speech.

So, they came to the place where the new world would be, and with Evena looking on, they set to its construction in accordance with her vision. The most powerful of the Astari, who were called the Izar, were tasked with making the base of the world from heavy metals, which only they had the power to create. Then came heaps of lighter metals and rock and other elements. Mountains were raised and seas were filled. It was a long and difficult process, but after years beyond counting, they had created enough material to shape the world. When the work seemed finished, they looked down on their combined creation with much satisfaction. But never again have the Astari worked together in such perfect unison.

**Of the children of Nuna and first great conflict ...**

Then, the Astari took physical forms and descended into the new world to live among one another in companionship. And there was a great split between those who would dwell in the vast oceans and others who would dwell upon the land. Evena was first to choose and she chose the sea as her home, along with Nuna, who was among the Izar. They were followed by hosts of more Astari, who now saw them as the first great leaders of their kind. And together they did lead. They took the form of two great whales and swam side by side in the seemingly endless waters for many years, and a great love began to form between them. New companionships like these were only made possible by the closeness of the new world. For the heavens were an isolating place.

But beyond closeness, the new world also granted the Astari opportunities to explore the limits of the four strands that made the heavens – their minds being wakened by the stimulus of such a physical place. Mind was of particular interest to Nuna, who often went alone to secret places in the deeps of the ocean to explore the limits of her own mind. Down there, in caves that were void of any light or sound, she gained a new understanding of mind that had not yet been learned by other Astari.

In an experiment of thought, Nuna split her mind into two parts, both housed in her singular body and identical in their yearnings. Then, she made a new body, again identical to her own, into which she instilled the small part of her mind that was split off from the rest. In doing so, she gave life to a new creature; one who's will matched that of her own. And she called the new creature her child. So it was that the first children of the Astari were born from the power of Nuna.

When news of the first children came to Evena, she was overcome with jealousy. New dreams of bringing many children into her world consumed her, but she wished the inspiration had been hers, and she feared losing control of the vision for the new world to her greatest companion. So, after she was taught from Nuna the method of splitting her mind, she resolved to make her own children greater in strength than the children of Nuna so that none could contest her dominion over the seas.

The first children of Evena were wicked beasts made to kill: sharks, leviathans, and sea serpents of humongous proportions. She set these children against the children of Nuna and there began a great battle for the seas. Evena was more cunning in the design of her children and they easily brought death to their opponents. But Nuna was an Izar who controlled immense power, so she made more children and she also made them deadlier than before. Together, they overcame Evena's creatures of war with strength in numbers. Seeing that her share of the universal power was diminishing, and that she was losing the fight to a stronger being, Evena escaped the oceans to begin anew on the land. But her fowl children still torture the seas in her absence.

### **Of Evena's arrival in Balemere ...**

After fleeing to the land, Evena discovered yet another rift in the orders of Astari beyond the rift of land and sea. Half of the land dwellers took the form of various winged and legged beasts. These mostly lived in packs; together enjoying the fruits of the land they had made, much like Evena and Nuna had done in the ocean.

Yet another half took humanoid forms and chose to live together in an elaborate kingdom high on a plateau in the rocky world. The kingdom was called Balemere, and it was ruled by an Izar named Kaino, who's share of the universal power was greatest of any Astari. Evena desired control of the kingdom and its Astari subjects in the hope that she might once again own the vision for the new world like she had during its creation. So, she conspired to seize power from Kaino using the great secret she had learned from Nuna.

On land, she gave life to another child; one less deadly and more beautiful than the sea monsters she had created in the water war with Nuna. The creature was humanoid like the Astari of Balemere had chosen to be. It was tall and its features were elongated. Its skin was pearl-colored, broken only by two dark eyes upon its face. Long silver hair was pulled into a braid behind its head. Satisfied with its form, Evena dawned

a similar body and walked with her child into Balemere before Kaino and a congregation of Astari. There, she revealed the secret she learned in the depths of the ocean.

She lied to the congregation, telling them that she alone discovered the way of splitting off pieces of mind and that she had spent her many years in the sea filling it with beautiful children. Then, she promised to teach the Astari of Balemere how to make children of their own, so long as they swore to create strictly according to her vision and relinquished control of the rocky world to her. There was consensus in the kingdom to agree to Evena's terms. For all now wished to breathe new life into the world they made. Even Kaino, who was careful of handing over control of their kingdom to Evena, looked upon her child lustfully. And once again Evena was in a position of power among the Astari.

### **Of the Kainans and the war for Balemere ...**

For many years, Evena and her new subjects expanded the footprint of Balemere and filled it with her children, which they now called the Balmorians. They were given a place to live alongside the Astari, whom they worshiped as lords of tremendous power; all except for Evena, who they worshiped above all else and looked to as their sole mother and creator. She basked in the glory of their worship while Kaino looked on bitterly – yearning for the same feeling of parentage. But support for Evena's vision was passionate among their peers, so he held his silence and let her vision proceed for a long time.

Kaino was not alone, however. Others among the Astari wished to escape the shadow of Evena to create from a new vision; one that was more uniquely theirs. So, Kaino and his supporters slowly and subtly deviated from Evena's plan, adding their own quirks or twists wherever they could. From this, their creative spirits were rekindled, and there was a hunger for yet more individuality among them. Not content with mere adaptations from Evena's vision, Kaino and his followers secretly set out

beyond the borders of Balemere to create children of their own in a great forest bordering the plateau.

He decided that his children should not be united by a shared will, but rather by love and kinship for one another. So, he gave these children free will to choose their own paths instead of being bound to the desires of their creators. They were called the Kainans – children of Kaino – and in their new home beneath the tall pines of the forest they could be hidden from the supporters of Evena in Balemere. There they dwelt in secrecy for many years, slowly expanding their villages under the guidance of their father and his Astari comrades. But it was only a matter of time before such secrets would be made bare.

Seeing these new children as a threat to her own and a challenge to her supreme authority, Evena called forth Kaino and his supporters and commanded them to destroy his children, along with the expansive forest villages they inhabited. But Kaino refused to do so, and he challenged Evena's right to control so strictly. He declared that his new association of Astari were separate from the Astari of Balemere, and that Evena's regulation no longer applied to them; and he suggested that his associates were free to create in the forest regions surrounding the peninsula, leaving the great kingdom of Balemere to the supporters of Evena. But Evena would not allow a separate society to contend with her own, so she declared war against the Kainans.

At first, the Kainans held strong against the siege of the Balmorians. They were more collaborative, and they outnumbered the Balmorians, having been made by the immense power of Kaino. But Evena's skill in design was unmatched by any Astari. Seeing that her children were in peril, she set out to create a new version of the Balmorians made solely for war. They were like original Balmorians in form, only they were larger and stronger, with sharper, more deadly features. These Balmorians were called the Areya, and they tore through the Kainan army with unprecedented effectiveness.

Desperate against this new threat, Kaino resolved to spend much of his remaining share of the universal power, which was still great, to generate a new metal that had not yet been created by any of the Astari – one that was harder and stronger than any before it. But before the last of his power was gone, he called forth a great leader among the Kainans and told him to use this new metal, now called silver steel, to forge weapons and armor for his kin. This he did, and with their new armaments the Kainans were again able to contend with the Balmorians in the war for Balemere.

It was a long time before either side could claim victory, and there were many casualties among both. But when the war was over, it was the Kainans aided by their silver steel who were victorious.

### **Of the council of Balemere and the creation of the Laws of Nature ...**

Kaino was intent on creating peace within the new world for the Astari and their children to live in. So, he wasted no time after his victory over Evena. He called all the Astari that dwelt in the new world, including the winged and legged beasts far to the east and south, to Balemere for a great council. Even Evena and her followers, who were still filled with wrath and anger at the Astari who overthrew them, were called upon to join the affair.

At the council, Kaino first proclaimed that all Astari should have the right to create according to their own vision instead of being subject to the vision of one. To this there was agreement among the council. Next, he proposed to establish a set of laws to regulate their creations so that peace and progress could be made possible without strife and conflict, and he asked all of his fellow Astari to contribute to and adopt these laws. To this the Astari were delighted, and they spent a great amount of time proposing and discussing among themselves. When they were finished, there were a dozen laws that most of the Astari agreed to adopt. These were called the Laws of Nature, and most



highly regarded among them was the law of free will, which released the children of the Astari from the wills of their creators.

Finally, Kaino gave permission to his fellow Astari to leave Balemere to create new lands and kingdoms if they wished. To this, four of Kaino's greatest supporters resolved to move east and south to establish their own lands. Each of the four had a unique vision that centered around a different strand of creation, and they each had followers that supported their visions. So, the new world was split into four territories for these four groups of eastern Astari.

The eastern Astari spent many years shaping their lands and forming their kingdoms. They were led by Okan, who favored the mind strand, in the western mountains, Charu, who favored the power strand, in the northern forests, Vela, who favored the dimension strand, in the eastern shores, and Lo, who favored the time strand, in the southern grasslands. Each of their kingdoms were tailored according to their beliefs and preferences, so each had children that were very different from the others'. Yet, despite their differences, all were guided by the Laws of Nature, so there could be a period of peace and prosperity among the eastern kingdoms.

Yet a fifth territory was carved out by Kaino at the great council and given to Evena and any who wished to remain loyal to her vision. This served as both mercy and punishment for Evena. For her territory was a barren wasteland in the frigid southernmost region of the world. And while the other four kingdoms prospered in their new lands, Evena and her followers watched as their children suffered in the unsuitable climate. The only among her children who were made able to survive such harsh weather were the Areya – most dangerous of her children – and a great anger began to fester among them in the bitter cold.