

Before the Great Gathering

By : **ecdavis**

This is an excerpt from Archmage Lelia Kinzer's ancient book, "The Great Gathering -- the history of our world" written in ancient times to explain to descendants of those gathered to this new world, the why and how of it all. It is very popular reading throughout the world and Aurei of Westmark's favorite book.

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There was, at the beginning of all things, only the great Creator God. This God came before all things and is all powerful. He created first his servants, called by various names in the various realities, but given the name "Angels" in the tongue of the prime world. The great God desired companionship and all that is good, but He wished those who sought companionship with Him to seek Him from their own free will.

His angels knew of His desire and His love of creating life. Most shared His passion for creation and good, but some became convinced that they were better qualified to govern the creation of all things. Led by the prime angel, a third of the angels rebelled against the Creator God and Civil War ensued. But the Creator God was victorious and these rebellious angels, who had exercised the gift that the Creator God had bestowed upon them "free will" now faced the consequences of their choice. They were thrown out of the kingdom of the Creator God and became the inhabitants of the lower planes, which we call Devils, Daemons and Demons.

The Creator God had created the first known plane of reality—the prime world and its universe. The Great God placed humans in this existence and monitored their lives, having given them the free will to worship Him or reject Him. This world lacked magic and only the most mundane of animals. There were no races of dragons, no Elves, Orcs or Trolls—the only intelligent race were human beings.

Some of the Creator God's angels who did not rebel still held thoughts within their hearts that disturbed the Creator God. After some time the Great God summoned these angels who had these disturbing thoughts. When confronted, these angels confessed their thoughts—for nothing was hidden from the Creator God. They had in their hearts the desire to try their hand in creating their own planes of reality, many secretly thinking they could improve on the Creator God's design. Though they had these thoughts in their hearts, they never acted on them and acknowledged the Creator God as their master.

But the Great God knew that where these thoughts festered, there would one day be another round of rebellion. So the Creator God decided to prove to these angels the folly of their thoughts and the danger of their arrogance. He gave this group of angels the ability to create their own universe—or multiple universes if they wished—and to run it as they wished, with some stipulations. First, this power granted to them was not permanent—they would have until the Creator God ended time in the prime world—and they did not know whether this would be centuries or many, many eons—to lord over the universes they created. During this period of their godhood, the Creator God would not interfere with their created realities, but there were some conditions that they had to meet.

In each reality, all intelligent beings would have the free will to choose to be good or evil. If they sought through philosophy or religion the Great God, they would not be hampered in seeking Him. Humans, or human-like beings had to be included in each world, each intelligent and with souls. There would be no contact between these created universes and the prime universe of reality that the Creator God made. It was off limits to them until its story was completed and judgment was passed on it at the end of time. After this happened, then the Creator God would come into the universes and realities created by

this group of angels and at that point His rules and laws would reign supreme. All the laws of nature set up in the prime plane of reality would be followed on the realities created by Angelic group, though some variation was allowed. Each reality would share at least some of the laws set up by the Creator God in his Prime universe.

If the angels did well in their creations, these universes would be allowed to continue in the same type of course that the Creator God had set up for the Prime Universe. Intelligent beings -good or evil- that died

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before the Creator God took over these universes, would be allowed a new life when He took control from the angels, and this second life would be judged in the same way that His human creations were judged in the Prime Universe. This second life would begin for these beings without any knowledge of their first life. They would start off as adults with only knowledge of their names, their skills possessed in their first life and their languages, they would not have any history.

This group of angels readily agreed to these terms and the contract began. Immediately they went into motion, bringing into existence various realities with a gusto that was amazing. Some banded together to form a pantheon of gods, ruling their creations with varying degrees of benevolence and wisdom. Some mimicked the Creator God and acted alone, either distancing themselves from their creation or taking very active roles in their universe. Others created sub-gods first and allowed them to believe they were the creators, then let these subordinates do the task of creating and governing the worlds.

Still others took a scientific approach and set into motion the actions, then let occur what occurred. Finally, others created universes that seemed to have a history from the point of creation, as if beginning the telling of a tale at its midway point. The forms of all these realities varied. Some created various planes for large numbers of subordinate gods, then added elemental planes, positive and negative energy planes and variations of their creation with some alteration. Others very closely mirrored the form of the Prime Universe to a remarkable degree, sometimes changing only small things.

Many of these universes and realities were set up to prosper under the creation of machines and devices to further civilization. Science ruled these places and in a large number of them, no god was known or worshiped, not even the angelic creators. Some creations had weaker levels of magic combined with science, each at varying degrees. But the majority of these realities were created by a group of 7 angelic beings who called themselves the Sidhe. This group believed magic was essential for a utopian universe and so allowed its use. First they created a large number of gods for each race of intelligent being. Then they created intelligent races. They created in some realities the humans first, but in an equal number of places they created the Elves as their primary, perfect race. Elves were given longer lives, in some variations immortality, as well as gracefulness, beauty and wisdom. Dwarves, Halflings, Gnomes and other folk were created secondly, following the Humans and Elves, and then, in later times when corruption came to the Sidhe's creation, the Goblin races, Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, Giants and Dragons.

It did not take long for evil to gain great power in the worlds made by the Sidhe. The demons, devils and daemons of the Prime Universe were able to have access to the Sidhe's worlds and brought great sorrow by those using black magic. Within several thousand years, the Sidhe's worlds had deteriorated to battles between selfish & good gods and their followers and evil demonic gods and their brood. One large tragedy was the often repeated saga & with slight variations of the fall of the dark elves or Drow as they usually were called & in a large number of worlds where Elves existed. These Elves turned to the Spider Demoness or other demons and devils as their gods and goddesses and brought much grief to the Sidhe's created sub-gods.

In all of this, the Sidhe kept almost entirely absent from the awareness of even their created sub-gods. Respecting the Free-will of their creations, they watched in dismay as evil grew more and more powerful and chaos seemed to swell daily. Yet all was not dark, there were those in these worlds committed to goodness.

My own part in this story begins with my father, the Archmage Kinzer. It seems that in each reality created by the Sidhe, there are certain individuals that exist in slightly different form, race, personality or attitude on the various universes. My father was one of these important people. In most realities, he was a champion of good, however, in our own universe, my father had plunged into evil after years spent studying and mastering demons. I was born as the result of a union between the Archmage and one of the Succubi Queen claimants. I was born on the Prime Material Plane, then, following my weaning, my father imprisoned she that bore me

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into a black gem which he cast into another dimension lacking magic, damning her for eternity.

With great effort, my father magically kept all physical traits betraying my demonic maternal heritage from my form. The vestal bat wings common among the Alu were not present when I was born, due to the nobility of my mother. The small horns were all that I was born with to betray my mother's fiendish nature and these my father removed under magic-assisted surgery so that not even the faintest scar remained. As a princess of the Abyss, my mother specialized in the seduction of the most strong willed and morally devout, so she possessed a I am told, for I never knew her an extreme beauty that matched the various goddesses of beauty and love. Unfortunately this was one trait of my mother that I inherited fully, to my own dismay. I began wearing a magic ring of beauty designed to enhance the physical appearance of the wearer to mortal perfection, but in my case, it lessened my own appearance to that of a comely human woman. I likewise inherited her immunity to certain types of weapons and magic, but also their susceptibility to Holy spells and artifacts, though I myself have never embraced chaos or evil.

My father spoiled me, sparing nothing for my upbringing and teaching me years of arcane knowledge as a child so that by the time I was a very young woman I had mastered the arcane arts and memorized hundreds of spells, much to his pleasure.

Yet he also was a tyrant, not allowing me to associate with anyone but the household servants and keeping me much of the time locked away in his high Wizard's keep. I spent hours pouring over ancient texts and sadly waiting for my imprisonment to end. Finally, just shy of my 18th birthday, the assassin Thalmar Komack led a party into the keep, sent out by rival Mages concerned about the evil that my father's sorcery was bringing into the world. Thalmar killed my father and kidnapped me, but I did not find it as such but as freedom and soon I had convinced Thalmar to leave the Assassin's Guild that he served as Grand Master and reform. We fell deeply in love and spent many years exploring the world and charting its wonders. After our children were born, we continued our research, then delving into the planes of existence and finally into the very dangerous exploration of other realities. It was during one of these times of adventure that we ran afoul of the Spider Demoness.

For many years we protected our family from retribution by the Spider Queen, but finally, she found us and used demonic magic to send a spy among us to gain our trust for years before striking. On one very terrible day, I was tricked into going through a portal under the guise of the discovery of a new, uncharted plane of existence. Once through the portal, I was trapped and used as bait to draw both Thalmar and my son and daughter as well as several servants into an illusion that concealed a sphere of annihilation. The demoness made certain I was able to see the last moments of their lives through a mirror of viewing. Then, as she laughed fiendishly at my helplessness, she imprisoned me in a case of ice that was magically cooled. I was frozen, yet my mind continued to think, and I was placed as a trophy within her palace in the pits of the Abyss for 200 years.

But unknown to her, my son had a consort who was with child at the time of the demoness's assault. This girl had the wisdom to go into hiding and keep a low profile, raising my grandson quietly but with purpose. He grew to manhood and fathered a son, who then fathered another son, and it was this great, great grandson who became the great dimensional wizard, the great Arch Mage Drake. It was Drake who, having been told the story of the ruining of his family, took up the fight against the demon queen and with an army of Elves, Humans and Dwarves, lead by the renegade Drow Paladin Eleazar, stormed into the Abyss and freed me from my hellish prison after 204 years.

My fiendish ancestry gave me supernatural immortality and Drake's own mastery over dimensional travel had as a side-effect the retardation of aging, so he too was in effect immortal. Together we spent several hundred years exploring the nearly countless planes of existence and alternate realities that the Sidhe had formed. The story of the origin of all things slowly was revealed to us through years of research and fragments

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of tales and legends collected in multitudes of places and times.

These worlds and realities were all documented and charted with the perfection of a regal scribe so that we could reach conclusions from our travels. We were able to go to most of the realities created by the Sidhe and their siblings, but never were we able to find a way to visit the prime world. It was only through the many variations of that world â copies made by the Sidhe and the other angels of the world made by the Creator God- that we could learn bits and pieces of the truth about this Prime world.

Of course our travels brought us to the notice of those who created the various realities that Drake and I visited. At first they only took passing interest in us, but after many centuries of research and charting the realities that they had created, they began to grow alarmed at our power and knowledge.

We found ourselves, one day, suddenly standing before an assembly of the Sidhe and their created underlings â the gods of the various realities they had created, to give an account of ourselves and to discuss our intentions. Although they were respectful to us, we both knew that we had breached a boundary and very likely faced some sort of imprisonment, punishment or removal of power. They debated for many, many days, our fate, until finally, we were brought before them to hear of their decision.

As they had just begun to speak, something happened that completely changed all the realities that they created. Something they had dreaded and feared for Eons of time. As one of the Sidhe began to tell us of their decision against us, there suddenly appeared before us all a blindingly bright light that completely filled the heavenly chamber where we had been brought. Waves of power flashed through the room like heat from a raging fire and for a long moment everyone stood squinting into the light, confused. Then as Drake and I looked at each other in puzzlement, the Sidhe followed by their created gods, rose from their seats, fell prostrate on the floor and bowed before the glowing light with their eyes shielded and their bodies trembling.

Unsure what to do or think, but feeling a rising amount of dread and fear from the blinding light, I decided to speak. I swallowed hard and had opened my mouth to say something when in a blink of an eye I was suddenly in another place. I was standing in a beautiful springtime meadow, filled with wild flowers and tall green grass, while a warm breeze blew. The sky was brilliant blue with large billowing clouds. It was a place I had never been, but seemed oddly very comforting and familiar and I felt very safe. I turned to my side and for an instant I thought my grandson Drake had journeyed to this place with me. Yet only for an instant, until I realized that the tall bearded man standing beside me was not Drake but someone I had never seen before. Yet he seemed somewhat familiar too. He wore the green and brown clothes of a hunter, ranger or perhaps wood elf, yet he was a human. I again opened my mouth, trying to figure out what to say to him, for I sensed that it was him that had brought me to this place. But before I could formulate any question, he spoke to me. Here is the conversation we had, I shall never forget a word of it.

â Lelia Kinzer, it is good to finally meet you. Iâ ve watched you for many years.â

â You have?â I replied, my mind still not quite sure what to say or ask.

â Oh yes, both your life and that of your descendant, Drake. Both of you have been quite busy.â

â Who are you, sir?â I finally formed a question, but I actually found myself dreading to hear his answer. He smiled gently at me.

â I think you know who I am, donâ t you?â

I found my throat dry. I nodded, looking down at his boots.

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“You don’t need to be afraid, Lelia.”

“I can’t help it.” I told him. I hadn’t felt so powerless since I was a little girl. So exposed, as if he knew everything I had done or would ever do or think.

“I am not here to judge you, my dear. Not yet, though one day everyone will stand before me and be judged. You have not lived a life devoted to good, have you?”

He looked at me, and I couldn’t look into his eyes, my heart raced and I felt suddenly horrified of my past.

“I am sorry, sir, I have no excuse.”

“Lelia, as I have told you, I am not here to judge you. I know you are more scared than really sorry for your past, but I also know that you have not acted this way because of any choice you really had. Until recently, you had no knowledge of who I am. You have time to change your fate. Which is why I am talking to you right now. You see, I would like to enlist your help.”

I looked at him, completely surprised, “Help?”

He smiled, “You see, those whom are called ‘gods’ in this world are themselves created beings, and their creators were the Sidhe, but you know of this. What you do not know is that the Sidhe are subject to my authority. All that exists is under that authority, Lelia. You no doubt wonder why I am suddenly taking an interest in these realities that the Sidhe have created. I allowed them, eons ago, to exercise the freewill that I gave to them. I did not give them this freewill so they would rebel against my authority or to develop a degree of arrogance that most of them has developed. They felt in their hearts that they could create realities that were flawless or at least nearly flawless. I allowed those who had not actively rebelled against me at that moment, the ability to fulfill their desires, with only a few specific limitations. As you have learned, they were very energetic in their creativity. Two of the stipulations I placed on them were that all intelligent beings would have the same freewill that they had, and that they would be allowed to seek me out if they chose to. I also set an unspecific period of time that their time as creators would come to an end and they and their creation would be judged by me.”

“So has their time of judgment arrived?” I asked, not completely understanding “at least then” what I was hearing.

“Yes,” he replied, “In the universe I created, time is nearing the end. I decided to examine more closely the worlds that my servants had created in their arrogance and pride. I have spent many years going from place to place and examining their creations. Many of their universes and their creations are pleasant places to live, yet all are flawed. I have regretted allowing their freedom, for in many place, evil is so strong that the races have no hope in anything good. It is not right, Lelia, for me to judge these intelligent races when there was very little knowledge of good or of me.

Therefore I am going to give all the intelligent beings in the various worlds that the Sidhe created, who are living today, a second chance. It is my decision that all the various self-aware races will be placed together in a new world that I have created. They will have the memories of their lives erased, though they will possess knowledge of who they are and the skills they have. This world will be structured like the worlds the Sidhe created, with magic, but with some important differences. No longer will there be countless planes of existence and thousands of gods. In this new world, there will be only the world, a heaven for all beings that are good, ruled by me. And a hell of those I have damned. None from this world will travel to Heaven or Hell without my approval. I am curious to see how the races created by the Sidhe will react to these new restrictions.

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All those gathered into this new world will only know that they have come from someplace else and that they were brought here by me. The world will be theirs to inhabit and they will have to build their own civilizations.

I have no plan to restrict the freewill of these beings to choose good or evil, and they will still have the ability to do great evil, if that is what they choose to do. But one day, no matter of their power, they will face my judgment.â

I began to wonder about those who were, though their wizardry or divine nature, immortal.

â What about the gods?â I asked.

He smiled, â They have one of three possible choices. They will each have an audience with me. They will submit to my Lordship and come with me into my heaven, as my servants, or they can choose to have their memories and divine powers removed, to live a life as a mortal being. If neither one of these choices are selected by them, they will be placed into hell until the day of judgment. The Sidhe will be given the same option.â

My own demonic heritage concerned me greatly at that moment, since it was apparent to me that those of the lower planes of existence were there at his design. I was horrified of the possibility of my future, so I didnâ t speak, unsure how to ask what I was dreading.

He seemed to know exactly what I was thinking, for he addressed the issue, â The Demons, devils and daemons and other vile creatures were cursed into their situation by my own hand, and the Sidhe created most of the cursed creatures of your own world in copy of my own design. The Sidhe created them evil, something I never did, and thus they erred greatly. I know of your fear, Lelia, for your mother was one of the most diabolical succubi created. How tragic that one so incredibly beautiful could derive such fiendish pleasure in seducing and then destroying people. You, however, were born, not created, as you have a soul and freewill. So you will be treated as all of those born mortal. Which leads me to the job I would like to ask you to do.â

â Okâ , I replied.

â What I want you to do is to monitor what is going on in this new world I am creating. I want you and several others I have selected, to act as watchers, to observe how the world I create functions. You will be allowed to keep your memories and your powers. You will not interfere with the course of the history of this world. If someone asks about me, you will tell them about me, but only then.â

I was puzzled why he would need my help and I asked him why?

He shrugged with a gentle laugh, â I donâ t need anyoneâ s help, but I want the testimony of several who witnessed life before I took control.â

â Testimony?â I asked.

â On the day of judgment, when I examine the motives of everyone. Those who have caused the problems that I have come to correct will be confronted with their failures. You will be one of my witnesses, you as well as the others I have selected.â

All of his words spun around in my head and I had too much to think about to reply at once. We walked in silence for a few minutes.

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“When will you make this new world, and move those into it?” I finally asked.

“As soon as our conversation has ended. I’ve spoken to all the others while I am speaking to you.”

I looked at him puzzled at how that was possible. He only smiled in explanation.

“So all the people I know now will not know me when their memories are erased?”

“Not all of them, you actually will know a handful of those I have selected as part of your group. Your great grandson Drake is one of them, and he has already agreed.”

This greatly relieved many of my fears, but I was still unsure of my own worthiness in this divine plan.

“I’m not sure that I understand everything yet, but if you think I am worthy, I will promise you to try to do what you want.”

He smiled and gently patted my shoulder, satisfied but seemingly not surprised at my answer, “You will do fine, Lelia, in fact, you are going to be the leader of your group of watchers.”

I opened my mouth to protest the position but suddenly he was gone and I was standing in a large clearing surrounded by woods. Glancing around, I saw a group of 12 standing around me, all looking equally surprised. Next to me stood my great great grandson, Drake, who grinned when our eyes met.

“Watcher?” I asked him and he nodded. The others standing around, of many various races, turned toward us at the sound of my voice.

Nearby stood a very tall, awesomely beautiful young Drow woman. For a long moment I thought she was none other than my old enemy, the Demon Queen. The resemblance was remarkable, and she wore the graceful plate armor of war that many Drow nobles wore into battle. Catching my glance, she came up to me, smiling slightly, which is something few Drow ever do.

“We are the chosen ones,” she said to me, and then indicated the land around us with a wave, “And this apparently is our new world.”

-from “The Great Gathering: A History of our World” by Lelia Kinzer

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