

## The Mother of Herald

I leave these words as a warning to those who follow if I falter or fail, or to be spoken in justification of the actions that I had to take. There is much to be learned from, and more mysteries in Creation than the mortal mind can comprehend.

### The Past Life of Varshula Radeera Olenta, Archmage of Spring

My name is Barana Illana Nabronyen, Wise One and member of the Assembly of Loyalty. I was honoured when Archmage Varshula asked me to be her guide in a vision of her past lives.

The vision showed us of a time before the Empire, in the land of Dawn. Varshula's name was Melianna d'Arcina, and she was filled with grief. Melianna's husband, Sir Rowan d'Arcina, lay dying. Sir Rowan d'Arcina had sought to slay a creature that Melianna had spawned with a Herald of Paw'nagrah, for Rowan had come to believe it was a monster.

Melianna-Varshula had a choice to make. Though her husband was beyond saving, the child-creature could be restored by taking it to a regio of Spring where it could be taken into Paw'nagrah's arms and enter a healing cocoon for a hundred years, or Melianna-Varshula could condemn it to death.

Melianna-Varshula chose the path of Loyalty to her offspring over Vengeance for her lost love. The Labyrinth rewarded her Virtue by dedicating her to this path, and the vision faded.

### The Dark Heart

I was troubled by what I had seen. Though I praised Varshula's Loyalty, I knew the fate of Melianna's daughter. Some thirty years earlier, the child, named Mel'yannah for her mother, had bound itself to a Spring regio in the Warrens: The Dark Heart of Spring.

There an orc tribe had given over a generation of their young so that Mel'yannah could create the Briar Lineage within Orc-kind. The result was a catastrophic

failure. The children were warped creatures of Orc and Spring and rampaged across the eastern edge of the Empire. A Coven of Arizeni magi ultimately gave their lives to destroy the regio, and Mel'yannah with it.

I did not tell this to Varshula, for she had made a Virtuous Choice, though the Empire would have been spared great harm had the child-creature died that day.

### **The Cycle of Birth, Death and Rebirth**

Following the vision, Varshula had an encounter in the Hall of Worlds with Plith Silthar, the Herald with whom she had spawned Mel'yannah. The bond they had shared some three hundred years ago was rekindled and, before I could urge Vigilance, Varshula was with child.

When the Archmage was not present, I challenged the Herald about its relationship with Varshula. It was then that I learned that the story did not end with the life and death of Mel'yannah. For Melianna d'Arcina was not the only time that their paths had crossed.

Following the founding of the Empire, during the reign of the Empress Richilde, a Highborn Magister named Gilead of the Seven Winds Chapter had a vision of being Melianna d'Arcina. Subsequent to his vision, Gilead met Plith Silthar again and Gilead became with child, despite having no womb. The child was named Gilean. As she grew, Gilean showed much interest in the mould, fungus, diseases and pestilence that arise within the natural realm. From within his Chapter, one who loved Gilead sought to slay Gilean, believing the child to be a danger to the Empire, but the lover died in the attempt. Gilean was taken to the Realm of Spring and went on to become a Herald of Vlofir.

During the reign of the Empress Varkula, a Wintermark Icewalker called Kevan Einarrson had a vision of being Melianna d'Arcina. Subsequent to his vision, Kevan met Plith Silthar again, and Kevan went on to lay an egg. The child was named Kvaasi. As he grew, Kvaasi showed much interest in undermining authority and challenging those above him. From within his Hall, one who loved Kevan sought to slay Kvaasi, believing the child to be a danger to

the Empire, but the lover died in the attempt. Kvaasi was taken to the Realm of Spring and went on to become a Herald of Irrah Harrah.

### The Call of Vigilance

At the time that I write this, Varshula has given birth to another Spring-touched child. This daughter has been named Baxshula, and she shows great fascination for all creatures of nature that bear venoms and toxins.

Though I have walked the Path of Loyalty all my life, it is Vardas that shows me what I must do now. I know the harm that Melianna's daughter did to the Empire before it was destroyed by seeking to bring Briar lineage to orc-kind.

I have learned the harm that Gilead's daughter and Kevan's son have also done by following their natures of plague and rebellion. I can see the harm in Baxshula's passion for poison, toxin and all things that are deadly to humans.

When I have finished this text, I shall secure it in a place that can be found by others of my Vale, that they may see what I have seen, and understand why I did what I had to do.

From the pen of the Wise One, Barana Illana Nabronyen