At the beginning of all time, before the creation of the earth, before the sun and moon, before animals and before people, there was only the eternal Nerromiktok, blessed be the name. They existed of the earth and through it. They existed in all space and time, forward to the end and backward to the beginning. They were all things, and all possibilities. Throughout themselves, Nerromiktok thought and wondered, pondered and meditated on all things. And the universe lay like this for an eternity; Nerromiktok in thought, and the world at rest, in a state of unmake.

However, after this eternity, Nerromiktok finally ceased his infinite thought, and looking at himself, decide to split himself into light and dark. Through the creation of the two, there would be a dynamism, a movement, and an ebb and flow to the world. Dark and Light now looked at one another and were satisfied. And so they danced.

They danced, swirling among themselves, reveling in their difference, endlessly curious about the otherness of their opposite. They weaved and flowed through the universe. All things were now Two. And varied between the two; back and forth, another eternity lasted in this state.

However, after this eternity, Light finally ceased its infinite dance, and looking at itself, decided to split itself, not into two, but into a million pieces. And so it did, and from Light the world came into being: the trees, the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and all animals and finally men as well.

Dark looked at these new things and was confused. There was no one to dance with any longer.

Dark shifted. Dark ebbed, and flowed. Dark searched and spun, looking all throughout the new universe. And the early men, and the early animals, and the sun and the moon all shrunk from the other. They did not remember the dance. They did not remember the Duality hat had been forever, just as Dark had forgotten itself Nerromiktok.

And they were fearful of Dark. They were fearful of the lack of light. To them, looking inwards, the universe was them. The universe was light, and so, they were fearful of that which was not themselves. They were fearful of the other.

One day, darkness came to the animals and the humans. In their terror, they reached inside themselves, drawing from them the light that they themselves were, and from this self-light they pulled taliq, the soul-flame.

In it was the heart of the original light, undampened by any lesser dark, hidden by no object. It shone through the word and the world was brightened by it. And Dark remembered Light. Dark saw the taliq and rejoiced. There before it was the partner with which it once danced. Yet Dark did not leave, for Dark was as of the universe as Light. And in making taliq, the animals and man had diminished themselves.

An uneasy existence for the remains of Light: man clung to life, forever perpetuating the taliq to hold back Dark, yet knowing that it was a precarious balance. The application of self was instrumental, and necessary, not simply for a season, or even for a lifetime, but for all seasons. And thus man lived, and laughed, and hunted and built and died, yet through it all must keep the taliq. To stop was to allow the darkness within, and all they had made would be caught in the dance.

It was in this time that Issumatar was born.

Issumatar lived far to the north. His tribe lay past the most inaccessible passes, further than the last great river, past the frozen marshes in a place where the land was cold and the sap needle trees lay burdened with snow. The tribe was so far north that right before their village lay the great folds of taliq, and beyond that, the darkness (for they did not know of Dark, merely darkness)

And Issumatar was born. His name meant Superior for he cried with a mighty roar at his birth. And through his life he was of his name, performing great feats of strength, daring and courage. So, when it came to his coming of age, the elders took him to the clearing in the twisted scatter-trees, where it was too cold for snow to fall, and the world was frozen and lifeless. They pointed to the north, and from the clearing, Issumatar could see the great taliq. And in this moment of wonder, they proclaimed him Ataneq, Champion.

The year was a blur for the new Ataneq. The training was fierce and unrelenting. The elder warriors, the great men of the tribe pushed him to his limits, past even feats that they themselves were able to accomplish. He must, after all, battle singlehandled with the darkness that lay beyond the taliq. The elder women challenged him in feats of the mind, assaulting him with puzzles of horrible complexity whose answers twisted and squirmed before the mind. He must, after all, see through with clarity, the deceptions of the darkness that was his foe.

And the men and women and children all labored hard in that year to create the gifts that he would take with him into the darkness past the taliq. From all ways of life, these gifts were made: crafts of strongest iron and hides of the toughest beast skin, sigil talisman of lesser taliq, clothing of the warmest furs, a spear taken from the very core wood of his name-tree.

And the labors of the year, the hunt and harvest, his training and the flow of life all passed before the march of time. And before too long, the full year had passed. It was the time of the Ataneq.