

SOUL AND BODY

A short story by G.E.M. Simov

At first, there was nothing.

The world was not.

Nor was time.

Yet, even as impossible as it was for nothing to be, nothing was, and it was only nothing. That nothing was so certainly, and so completely, that it could not be treated as anything but everything, even if it was nothing. And even though it was nothing, it was all there was, and it was everywhere that there could be, and it was everywhen at which it could be.

But there was nothing, ultimately. It was very hard to *be* nothing, though, since nothing was not, even if nothing was. Out of that immense effort to be nothing, which took an infinitely long amount of time, which was simultaneously with that infinitely short, because there was no time, *something* came to be.

That, which was, came to be out of nothing. It did come out of somewhere, even if that somewhere was nowhere, so it had a point of origin. With the appearance of something, nothing was no longer everything. Instead, that something became everything, while nothing remained nothing, and there was now everything and there was no other thing, there was nothing aside from everything.

With there being everything and there being nothing, things were still difficult. After all, nothing is such that it is not. Otherwise, it is not nothing, it is something. So, as a result of the great effort being devoted to retaining the state of things as it was - with everything being and nothing being - time began at a certain moment.

Prior to that moment, there had been no time, nor had there been a moment, but at that very instant time began. It could be said that time began when something came out of nothing, but since even after that nothing still was, it would be impossible for time to pass. However, with the moment that occurred, time began to pass, and nothing changed in such a manner that would allow it to be nothing, whilst remaining nothing and not being something.

That, which happened, was that something changed. Everything, actually, changed.

Everything had been everything ever since it had come out of nothing, and maintaining itself as everything was incredibly taxing - as was nothing's maintenance of its nothingness whilst also maintaining its being - and that incredible effort led to an exhaustion of everything.

Upon becoming exhausted, everything needed to rest. However, if it were to start resting, it would stop putting in the effort needed to remain itself, so it could not start resting. Thus, everything split apart, leaving behind two things.

The two things, which were two halves, were light and darkness. They constituted everything, but only together. If they were apart, they constituted nothing - for with the presence of only light, there was nothing, and with the presence of only darkness, there was nothing. Together, however, the two allowed for there to be everything, and for nothing to not be.

With that split, which was the moment time was born, things were set in motion. Nothing, which was no longer something, and no longer was at all, had given way to the union of everything's two halves and always lagged behind them. Everything, which no longer was everything, was now nothing, even if everything, which was light and darkness, was.

Nothing was the past, whereas everything, the union of light and darkness, was the present. The future, however, was also nothing. All that was was the present.

When everything split itself in two and left Light and Darkness, all the exhaustion accumulated from being was transferred to Light. In that moment, before anything followed it, the two of them met. They saw each other, and they were filled with understanding of one inexplicable thing.

They needed to be together.

Each of them was so strongly drawn towards the other that the compulsion to reach Light was impossible for Darkness to withstand, and so was the desire to unite with Darkness absolutely inexorable for Light. That was love, in its rawest, purest form - and it was the force that drew Light and Darkness together, as it was everything.

In that infinitesimally small moment, Light and Darkness loved one-another so greatly, so completely, that everything spread out and took form, albeit a rugged, shapeless form, it adopted one nevertheless. And within everything, Light and Darkness laid, only for Light to fall asleep, tired from the ordeal of keeping everything in a state of being.

Darkness was left alone, in a sense. Everything was, and it remained, but it was not as it should have been. Light was still present, still with Darkness, and they were united, but only barely. Light's sleep had separated them in all aspects but the most fundamental, and Darkness could feel a great unease, as though their togetherness was threatened, and as though all their efforts could wind up being in vain.

Still, those were distant concerns for Darkness. The main problem that plagued her was Light's absence. Even though he was right there, right next to her, even though she could caress him, even though she could feel his warmth and hear his breath, he was not present. That hurt her greatly, for she needed to be with him.

Alas, she was filled with great fear, for she did not know what would happen if she were to awaken him - perhaps things would be fine, but she feared that if the exhaustion was not allowed to dissipate, Light would perish. If that were to happen, Darkness, too, would perish, and all that would remain would be nothing, and everything would have been in vain.

The fear of losing Light, even if her current experience with him was not as wonderful as it could be otherwise, was terrible enough to force Darkness to wait, and so she waited. Time passed, she knew, and a lot of time passed, but Light still remained asleep.

During his slumber, Darkness grew more and more restless. She wept for him, and whenever there were no more tears that she could shed, she sighed heavily and felt a great, insurmountable weight press down upon her. From her breaths and her tears, the shapeless forms of everything were changed. That, upon which Light slept, was elevated, as was that upon which Darkness would tread and pace, trying to stop herself from worrying.

That, which was beyond, was covered in her tears and gradually became submerged beneath them, leaving a surface, which had no form nor shape. Her breaths, however, made the surface bend and swirl, and gave it a shapeless form as well.

So greatly distraught was Darkness that she failed to notice these changes she had unintentionally caused until everything had already been altered. When she did take note of them, she was horrified at the discovery. What had she done? How had she so horribly mangled the result of Light's love for her? Was it even anything anymore?

Frightened and overwhelmed by the weight that had accumulated upon her, Darkness collapsed, similarly to Light, and felt herself being gently taken hold of. Light had awakened, and so beautiful was she, that Darkness immediately forgot his worries. The two had but a moment to spend in one another's true company, but it felt more than enough.

Then, when Darkness did fall asleep, exhausted from maintaining everything, Light was left alone. Similarly to him, she was worried about him, and craved his presence, but could not allow herself to awaken him. She had been so overwhelmed by everything that she had been unable to remain conscious, and it was easy to discern that the same had befallen Darkness.

Thus, she resolved to not wake him, though her worries gnawed at her intensely. She spent a long time sitting by his side, caressing him gently, hoping that her touch would alleviate his exhaustion and allow him to come back to her sooner, and so she sighed heavily, and a great weight placed itself upon her.

However, as she cradled his head in her lap, her eyes allowed themselves to wander. Light saw what Darkness had done, and she liked it. She reached out and ran her hand through the shapeless forms of the surface beyond, and they became clearer, wondrously blue, with crowns of white, and small spheres reaching for the surface from beneath it, only to disappear as they did.

She looked up and saw that there was a vast space even further beyond, and reached for it, too... Her gentle touch left soft spots in the firmament, and her blissful breaths made it blue, but not like the surface she had previously caressed.

"It is as you are," Light said to the surface while looking at the firmament, and it was, indeed, azure. She was growing more and more tired, but seeing what Darkness had made filled her with joy, which was enough to dull the pain of his absence, so she continued.

Light ran her hand over the ground where she had knelt and Darkness' frame rested, and felt that it was rough. That meant it was not comfortable, and that, in turn, meant that Darkness' rest would be troubled. So she gently kneaded the ground until it became soft and welcoming, brown where she knelt and yellow where it met the blue surface.

Then she felt tired, so tired that it became difficult to move at all, and Darkness awakened. They embraced and their joy was infinite, and everything was in as pronounced an earnesty as it could be. But, alas, Light fell asleep once more, and Darkness was left to watch over what had been made.

Darkness could no longer see the shapes and colors of the forms she had made, though having laid eyes upon them while Light was awake had left her filled with great mirth. Her sorrow at their separation was similarly vast, and it could have been enough to totally stop her from doing anything save for conserving her energy just so that she could stay with Light a moment longer, but the fact that Light had given something to her tears and her breaths meant that he had found them precious.

So Darkness touched the ground beneath herself and felt it soft, though it was incomparable to Light's embrace, and to what Light himself deserved. Thus, she bent down, never leaving his side, and plucked little forms, still shapeless and lacking essence, out of it. She pulled at the everything and made it small, protruding from the ground, and then made many. Inspiration she drew from Light himself, and like the rays of his radiance she tried to form that which she plucked from the ground.

Many did she pull at, so many that the entirety of the ground was covered in them by the time exhaustion overcame her. Some, she realized, were far thicker and taller than the rest, while others were broader. Darkness had not managed to emulate the perfection of her beloved's form, and that saddened her, though it also brought her great joy, for knowing that Light was so splendid was enough to spur her into a bout of laughter.

Light awakened shortly thereafter, and her radiance brought shape and essence to all that was, and the azure above reflected her beauty, as did the wavy surface beyond, and the ground beneath them appeared softer and gentler than before. Realizing the greatness of his exhaustion

at maintaining everything, Darkness managed to spend but a few moments in blissful unity with Light... Then he fell into a deep slumber.

Light held him close, knowing that it seemed as though they would forever be apart like so, and tears streamed down her face. They soaked the ground beneath them, and the strands, that Darkness had plucked, drank hungrily.

Life came to them, and they took on shapes themselves, becoming green and soft, moving in unison with her breaths as though they were locked in a dance. Seeing them, Light was touched by Darkness' dedication to her, and she reached out to caress the tips of some. Where her fingers landed, colors bloomed - yellow, red, blue, pink, orange - so many of them that they threatened to go beyond what could be counted.

These wonderful things arranged themselves in patterns more impressive than the next, creating paths and bundles of splendor, filling Light's heart with glee. The broader forms became like frames, with bits of green held aloft by them. Spheres of color appeared in between the green, and they seemed to be filled with a sweetness as of yet unknown to Light.

Lastly, the tall forms required different attention. Still, there would be green upon them, but not as it was upon the others. So specific were their shapes that Light could imagine herself leaning against them, with her radiance bent and redirected by grand circles of forms. Thus, the thick beams that came out from the ground were made to resemble the brown, while their tops were covered in so much green that they appeared nearly impassable.

As she concluded her activities, Light laid down and sighed, knowing that her slumber would follow soon after her beloved's awakening. However, when her breath carried through everything, it made the green move more energetically, it made these green things rub against one another and let out a calming song. For a moment, Light simply laid there and listened to the rustling.

Then Darkness woke up, and she heard and saw these wondrous things that he had done, and her entire being was overwhelmed with such immense joy that she forgot about the impending separation that would befall them. So it did, and Light fell asleep as he laid there, embraced by and even caressed gently by the streaks.

The colors faded, and everything was, once again, shapeless and without form. Darkness managed to keep a hold of the jubilation she had felt as she had awakened, and with it as what spurred her on, she walked over to the edge, where the streaks ended and the surface began. There, she kept walking, and soon she was under the surface, and she looked at all that was beneath it, and she knelt down and dug up small things, which were soft and malleable in her hands, and she shaped them with her fingers, gently and gingerly.

Still, they remained formless and vacant, but she made many of them - so many that she lost count, and some lingered where she had let go of them, others had fallen to the ground. Lastly, she also plucked at the floor beneath the surface, and pulled out many streaks, this time ones long and sleek. Then she plucked more and more, and they became like bundles, as she tried to recreate the magnificent patterns of colors she had seen, and to the best of her abilities, but, alas, in her own apparently inferior manner.

So engrossed she was that she realized how great the weight of being was just as she concluded, and with an effort comparable only to that of being, she made her way to the, by now, stirring Light. She awakened, and he collapsed next to her, urging her to look beneath the surface as she embraced him. Such warmth and comfort he felt in her presence that he was immediately taken by the dream.

Light, disappointed that they had shared only a moment together, did as he had nudged her, and made her way to the yellow border between the brown-green and the blue, and she looked at it move about with her breath. Then, she stepped into it, and it clung to her affectionately, and she descended beneath the surface.

There, she gasped in surprise, as all the strands and bundles burst into color. The long and thin ones moved in unison with the movement of the waves above, green, somewhat like those on the brown, but a bit duller. The bundles were so very messy and varied, looking just like the blooms she had given to the green streaks on the surface, if a bit leaky and different.

Then, she saw the things on the ground or floating about - and with wonder, she reached out to touch one.

It sprang forth, moving in its own way, in no unison with her breath or anything else. It was small and like silver, covered in tiny little scales and sporting fins that it could move about. This thing was a creature, and so amazed was she with it that she spent a long, long time simply looking at it, bewildered by its incredible beauty, and the magnificence of Darkness' creation.

The thing darted about, its big eyes looking her, and then at the green and the colors, and it moved in such an effortless manner towards them that Light felt it was elegant and beautiful, quite unlike the solid, brown or green things above the surface, though they were fine in an entirely different way.

Such excitement coursed through Light that she went on to give life to all the things left behind by Darkness, all of them so unique and splendid, even if similar in some regard. And the more of them that started moving about, the more enchanting the sight before Light became, so she remained under the surface, watching the creatures wobble about on many feet, or crawling over the ground, or floating about with fins and wobbly parts of the body.

The splendor on display made her unable to notice her exhaustion setting in, and so she fell asleep under the surface, a great shame filling her being, for she had been so astounded by Darkness' work that she had failed to be by his side when he woke up.

And Darkness was horribly worried when she did rise from her slumber, and when there was no Light for her to behold. Yet there was color in everything, and his beauty was to be found everywhere, so her concerns dissipated. As she started making her way towards him, for the incredible pull of his being on her was ever present and it was in her nature to want to be with him, to find him, to not just want to be with him, but to BE with him, she noticed that the surface, or rather what was beneath it, was incredibly lively and colorful.

And there was Light, lain upon a bed of green and red and blue and purple, and the many little things that wandered about him were gently nuzzling themselves into his sides, as though to caress him, and Darkness was glad. Alas, he was asleep, and the life faded from everything, becoming formless and shapeless, so she could not see the things that he was so engrossed in observing, and that brought her great sorrow.

It appeared as though that way of extending their beings and basking in one another's presence was faulty, for it was him that allowed things to truly be, whereas she only made them possible. Darkness came to know that she was the potential for everything to be, which was half of all that was, whereas Light was the actualisation of that potential. Without her, he would be unable to be, nor would anything else be, and without him, she, too, would be unable to be, as would nothing else be able to be.

She had known this intrinsically, but she did not realize she did know it. Now, as she considered why it was that things lost their life and shape, and became almost nothing when Light was asleep, she truly came to know. And that saddened her even more, for she would be unable to bask in his beauty, and in the magnificence of his being, even if she did all of this...

Then, Darkness considered something else. It came to her, as if from nowhere, but it was also something that she had known intrinsically. He was as splendid as he was because she was there... And perhaps to him she was just as sublime as he was to her. Perhaps he longed to see her make the potential for things to be as much as she craved to see things become...

But, most important of all, perhaps the joy she felt at seeing his color and life spread through everything was like the joy he felt at seeing it, himself. Darkness considered that his joy was hers, and so she was emboldened to keep doing things, making them so that their potential to be could be actualized, so that they could be!

So she started work on something, scooping up great amounts of the ground beneath the surface, and so great an amount it was, that she concluded it would be too big a thing that she would make, so she split it into three. However, at that point her exhaustion grew too great, and before she could finish it, she knew she had to sleep.

Light awakened and his wonder spread across everything, and Darkness saw the creatures sprout to life, and she saw them dart about, and she saw the colors, and as he embraced her, she embraced him, mirth filling her whole being. She held him for a while, admiring him, thankful that he was, then laid him to rest as gently as she could.

Before her, the three great things lingered, and she thought to herself of whatever they could be. She had no way of knowing that they were not finished, but their roundness was discernible,

and it meant something. So Light took the biggest one of them and, without much thought, threw it up. As it flew, tearing through the surface and making it splash about wildly, it started gaining color. It kept flying up so high that it went past even the azure! At that point, the big round thing started shining, as though it reflected her light... And it was beautiful, so, so beautiful that Light herself was speechless.

Then, she noticed that it was still moving - so strongly had she thrown it that it was still flying, and it would never stop flying. That did not mean it would not fall, even if it was flying, and as Light moved to the other side of the green and brown, she saw the big ball of light dip itself beneath the surface... And its light disappeared.

That was when Light realized that this was something she could use. So she waited for the ball to appear on the other side of the surface again, and grabbed it, holding it down so that it would slow down. She held it down for as long as she could, until her exhaustion overtook her. That was when Darkness opened his eyes, and as she felt herself falling asleep, she let go of the sphere... Only for it to not go up, but rather go down.

For a short and transient moment Darkness saw this ball of light as it illuminated everything, as it reflected Light's wondrous being, and he was left glad that she had done this. However, she was very saddened, and she told him that the ball was meant to slowly float through the firmament while she slept, so that he, too, may see the wondrous sights that she was bringing to actualisation.

Upon hearing his words and noting his distress, Darkness was so filled with joy that he loved her so incredibly much, that she was so dear to him that he would want to do such a thing, that she could not express herself in any way other than letting out a little laugh and taking hold of him. And as she laughed everything around them changed, even as he fell asleep and things lost their life and color, Darkness laughed and laughed and laughed.

And her laughter stirred the firmament, and it stirred the ground, above and below the surface, and she laughed and laughed, and just like her breath came and went sharply, so too did the land beneath her change. It folded and folded and folded, and it bumped against itself, and big, great yet shapeless forms appeared everywhere, until her laughter subsided.

There was more to do, though, so Darkness went to the remaining two things and altered them slightly - thinking that, perhaps, those two could be special, ones that reflect the light of the shining ball, rather than directly reflecting Light's iridescence. And she did touch them up, and then reclined next to him, basking in his presence, even if it was as faint as it currently was.

She stirred from her dream, looking at him as he looked at her. Serenity, as fleeting as it was, enveloped them... And then it was gone, for he fell asleep.

Light found herself illuminated by the ball, as it started rising from the surface and scaling the firmament, slowly and gradually, almost as though it was a bit lazy. That saddened her, for she had wanted it to rise over Darkness, to illuminate him and all the wonderful things he had made... So she wondered why it was that being was so difficult, and why did it require such tremendous effort? It was somewhat wrong for there to be such unbearable joy when she was with him, yet for their time together to be so short, as if by necessity.

She sat next to his sleeping form and thought, looking at all the things around herself... And then she noticed it. These creatures that Darkness had made, and she had given life to, were. They *were*.

And they ceased to be, but they also came to be. Light peered at them as they floated about, some in pairs, others in solitude, others yet in large groups. She gasped as she saw some that were bigger dart towards smaller ones and swallow them whole, while the smaller ones gulped down even smaller beings, or nibbled on the green.

It seemed as though they were not aimlessly floating or walking around, no, they were always feverishly searching for something to eat, and they were also desperately trying to avoid being eaten themselves.

So they were also putting in great effort to be, yet they did not seem to be capable of joy. Why, then, were they so determined to keep being? Perhaps it was something that was intrinsic to being - a great effort to withstand the pull of nothing, to avoid becoming it? It was so for her and Darkness, she knew, but for them it was because of their boundless love for one another, and their need to be together - rather than some desire to not stop being... Though what they sought

was a type of being, if one characterized by a collectiveness that was somewhat missing in what these creatures did.

Then, Light looked upon the two things that Darkness had made, and she knew that, although smaller than the one currently making its way through the firmament, they could also illuminate things and give them life. She took them, one in each hand, and as she did so they took on shapes and their forms became full. One was silvery white, the other was a pale green... But as she looked at them, their shades fluctuated, and they were not constant. The silvery-white one looked blue, or yellow, sometimes even a bit red, as did the green one. Even so, they still reflected the light of the greater ball, and so they would do well.

She threw them, first the white one, then the green one, and waited for them to go over the firmament once, as if to get acquainted with the way. When they showed up from beneath the ground under the surface, Light took hold of them, but not as she had with the big ball, from above, but rather grabbed them from below, so that they would not change their path.

And so she waited for Darkness to awaken, as her exhaustion grew, and when he did move, she joyfully let go of the spheres, just as the big ball was setting behind the surface. Light made her way to Darkness and laid down next to his stirring form, pleased that he would be able to see the fruits of his labors.

Yet she only had a desire to behold him, and his joy was intoxicating to her, so she laid next to him and looked at him. Long after he had fallen asleep, she wistfully basked in his presence, and failed to notice that not all the light had drained from everything. When she did, she was in shock, as the two small balls were moving over the firmament, one silvery white, the other pale green, and they illuminated all that was.

Darkness stared at it all and gasped in immense bewilderment. The countless dots in the firmament, the gentle rustling of the green and brown ground, or the splashing of the blue surface. She wandered about and looked at all the things that were there, and she was glad that Light loved her so deeply that he would do this for her. And she looked at the things she had made for him, and she acknowledged that most were not very alive, only partially.

They were sleeping, just like Light was, and she, too, realized that they *were*. Yet there were also other things, some that did not sleep, some that moved about in the dim light of the two balls and did their being in a more particular manner.

Darkness was so engrossed in observing the things that were that she wound up not doing anything else. But that was understandable and reasonable to her, for unlike Light, she had only managed to obtain glimpses of the wonders of the world. Now that she could see more clearly, she felt as though her already boundless love for him grew. For her it was an inexplicable act of beauty and affection - the sheer existence of him - and she was unable to understand how it was that he was, for what he could do was so different from what she could do...

However, thinking about it meant that, perhaps, it was one of the countless reasons she loved him. And were there truly countless reasons, she wondered, and started thinking of why it was that she so adored Light, aside from her being itself compelling her to do so, and being dependent on that love. She thought of many - she loved the way he simply was, the tender touch he could lay upon her, the warm embrace that he provided, the excitement that he felt whenever he saw one of the things she had made for him, the color that filled everything around him, the immensity of life that he carried so effortlessly and gave away generously, with just a touch...

The more she thought, the more authentic her love for him became, even if up until that point it could not have been any more authentic. In a sense, she was creating the potential for an even more authentic and an even truer love, and Light's sheer existence was giving it life and making it true. She thought to herself that the world was truly wonderful, thanks to his being, and she watched the pale balls making their way through the firmament. One was slightly bigger than the other, but also moved faster. The smaller one was somewhat tardy, but that gave it a quality that made it seem as though it was more mellow than its companion. In addition, though, it was very faint, as if it was shy, and it was difficult to make out, as though it hid in the shadow of the brisker, bigger ball.

And then, as the weight upon her grew unmanageably burdensome, she saw the great ball of light emerge from beneath the surface, and with its radiance it drowned out the smaller celestial bodies, making them fade out and completely disappear from view. Then, Light awakened, but to his surprise, and to hers, he was not immediately smitten with slumber.

So they embraced and whispered sweet words to one another, affirmations of their love that spread out throughout the world and touched all the things that were. So joyful were they that they had been able to spend a minute in each other's earnest presence, that it gave to all other things something new.

Then, gladdened by that event and by his great love for Light, Darkness fell asleep. She held him in her arms for a long, long time. However, she then observed something else - the many beings that were, down beneath the surface, had started doing things that had not been done before. So Light approached them and observed, and under her illumination they appeared even more excited to take part in that new activity of theirs.

The creatures, those of them who looked alike, would move in synchronized fashion, rubbing up against one another, and Light recognized that this was a sort of love. Some of the beings fought for affection, others created wondrous forms in the ground beneath the firmament, others yet brought sustenance to their beloved. Light watched with glee as all beings began to love one another, and to her immense surprise she saw them reproduce.

For, following the many showings of affection, forth came others. Many little ones, who were barely able to *be*, and had to be protected by those who had spawned them. Light was so enamored with them that she came to call the ones who made them “parents”, and the ones who had been made “children”.

She returned to Darkness' sleeping form and waited for him to awaken, and he did, and again they had a minute to spend together. Staving off her slumber, Light told him that they were parents to countless little things, and that through their love all their creations could also love one another. That, in turn, was an affirmation of their boundless affection - of Light's for Darkness, and of Darkness' for Light.

And asleep he fell, and the celestial bodies in the firmament once more became visible. But Darkness barely saw them - hurriedly, she went to see, and indeed there were. Countless children! But, as she observed, she found herself perplexed. They showed love to one another, but only to those of them who looked alike. The others, she realized, were not treated as such. That saddened her greatly, for her children did not truly love one another as she loved Light.

Thus, she took some of them as they slept, and carried them beyond the surface. Placing them among the streaks, she slightly altered them - made their little limbs bigger and stronger, so that they may walk about. Many of them she brought over, and countless tiny alterations she made, and when the great reflective ball appeared, she was spent. So she returned to Light, and told him of her discovery, and he was touched by how much she loved him, so that she would want their children to love one another in that same fashion.

Alas, no matter how wonderful and varied the many new shapes that she gave life to were, they did not show that affection to one another. Some did, living alongside one another and simply being, eating the many green streaks peacefully, but others did not. Much like what had come to be under the surface, so it was upon the ground. Light, similarly saddened by this, sat down under one great tree, those green-adorned brown *beings*, and sighed.

Her sorrowful breath was carried by the wind, until it was inhaled by a creature. Such great sadness filled it that it wept and wept, for it realized what it had done, and it realized how greatly that had hurt its parents. Light saw the being, and she knew that it knew her, and she was filled with joy, for, perhaps, it would be able to love all others as she and Darkness loved them and one another.

She spent her time with this little being, adoring it and being adored in kind, and seeing how it loved all others in a similar capacity. Such joy the small one brought her that she lost track of time, and just as exhaustion came over her, she brought it to Darkness.

He had awakened, still drowsy from his slumber, and upon seeing the living little thing, with a twinkle in its eye, he was gladdened. He embraced Light and she embraced him, and they spoke about the little creature, which had also grown tired. Darkness resolved to change it, to make it capable of expressing its love in a far greater capacity than it could now, and Light encouraged her to do so.

And when he fell asleep, as did the little being, she took it and gently caressed it. Under the light of the countless celestial bodies, Darkness gave it two long limbs that would be used to walk upon the ground and two other, slightly shorter limbs, which could be used to embrace another.

Finally, she sculpted the little being's face, giving it the capacity to express love with more than just its eyes - an expression and a voice as well.

So long had she worked that Light stirred just as she was concluding her labor, and upon his waking, he saw the little thing and was filled with jubilation. His joy only grew when he realized that there were many more of them, and all shared in the great love of him, of Darkness and of all else.

Over the course of her waking time, Light walked among the little beings, and came to call them Gods. She taught them what was what, she shared the names of all things with them, and they learned quickly. So quickly and so well did they learn, that by the time she grew tired, they had started making names for even more things.

They called her presence the "day", and her absence - the "night". They picked out names for one another, and she approved each of them. They spoke, they played and they ate, and everything was wonderful, and through that process she realized that she was slightly less exhausted than she had been upon the arrival of previous nights.

Darkness rose, and for the first time she was not greeted by Light's immediate presence, for his attention was so occupied that it was as though he was channeling his being in a particular direction. He was surrounded by the Gods and they loved him dearly, and in their love for him Darkness recognized his own love for her, as well as her love for him. She sat, watching and enjoying his distant visage, and to her great surprise he remained awake for far longer than otherwise.

Still, he noticed that she was awake. He drew closer and embraced her, and she returned the sign of affection, and she shared her observation, though she had to console him that she was not hurt by him not being by her side when she had woken up, for she had felt his love through being itself and through the Gods.

Thankful, he urged her to spend time with their children as he had, and so she did, once he was asleep. The Gods were curious and clever, and they wanted to learn as much as they could - but, not only that, they also wanted to be able to do as she and Light could. Seeing that this covetous

urge of theirs was much like the desire within her and her beloved to be with one another, she decided to teach them.

And they learned how to take parts of that, which was, and to change them. She was impressed and delighted to learn that they had named everything, and that it was the world that they would change through her teachings. She observed them as they learned how to take dirt and stone, how to influence plants and animals, so that they would grow differently and pleasantly.

For a moment, she even thought to herself that through the intervention of the Gods, those who lacked the love for others would be able to find some peace. And it seemed as though that was the case, for the Gods set off to create homes for all, not just for themselves, but for many of the animals. For others they simply said that they lived somewhere, and the plains and valleys became their dwellings.

The Gods worked and worked, and through their labor, much like through Darkness' own toiling, they expressed their love for her, for Light and for all that was.

Light awakened, and she, too, was not in Darkness' embrace. However, she saw the great many things that the Gods had done, and she saw them tirelessly working and doing many more and newer things. Most important of all, she saw Darkness teaching them how to do those things, and in her beloved she saw such great affection, such immense compassion and benevolence, as the Gods had deemed to call his demeanor towards them, that she was not distraught in the slightest.

And indeed, while she wanted to rush over to him and embrace him, she stopped herself and tempered her desire, for she remembered what he had told her. As they remained apart, they appeared to be able to stay awake for longer periods of time. Regardless, though, Darkness sat down and his exhaustion was clear, at which point she came to his side and embraced him.

Over the course of many days and nights, they would spend time with their children, always apart, which hurt them greatly, but the pain was dulled by the affection of the other they could feel through the world and the Gods. They awakened alone, yet surrounded by their beloved, and they would observe them busy themselves with their children, teaching them all kinds of things and loving them unconditionally.

But they never could remain awake together. Regardless of how minimal their contact was, regardless of how distant they were from one another, while in the world, they could not be together even in that regard. They could observe one another for thirty minutes before one would succumb to exhaustion, and that was as much as they could muster. The closer they drew, the more tiring it was.

Yet it was within them to desire and to crave the closeness of their beloved, and so they inadvertently found themselves in a gentle embrace.

The Gods, too, came to know of this. That Light and Darkness craved to be together, yet they simply could not. That saddened their children greatly, and they decided to do something about it, to help their beloved parents.

The Gods got to work, creating elaborate things that they called temples, and within those temples they attempted to create the conditions for Light and Darkness to come together, and to be able to remain such without the great effort that was otherwise required. Their parents were appreciative of their work, but both of them knew that it would not bring fruition - for, after all, seeing as their own attempts had proven futile, how could their children, who still knew nowhere near as much as them, be able to succeed?

Days and nights passed, and Darkness' love for Light only grew, as did Light's yearning for Darkness thrive. But the Gods became distraught. Their desire to see Light and Darkness together had flourished into their great goal, as though it was their reason to be, even if that was not the case. Their parents reminded them that they had no such purpose, yet the Gods, cognizant of that, chose to maintain that this was a path selected by them. A task set before them by themselves, a means of showing their great love for Darkness and Light - for Darkness and Light, the Gods had understood, were the world.

As a means of succeeding, they emulated Light and Darkness' deed, and took one animal. That being they changed as they had been taught by Darkness, and then they asked for Light's breath to give it the ability to love others. She gave it to the creature, and it was called "human". Humans were smaller and weaker than the Gods, but they, too, lived with a great craving for love.

However, they were also different. Whereas changing the world came somewhat naturally to the Gods, humans struggled with it immensely. They could learn how to do it, but it took great amounts of time - of which they did not have as much as the Gods. Humans were mortal - like all other creatures - and they grew old and died. Their affection and love was, thus, intense and earnest, though short-lived and saddening.

Darkness and Light found within the love that humans felt an incredible potency, one that almost perfectly reflected their own devotion to one another. That made it slightly easier to bear the burden of being apart.

Alas, they soon came to know a terrible truth. The pain of being apart was not just theirs to bear - the Gods, and humans alike, could also feel great torment and boundless anguish at being unable to express their love and to be loved back. So great did the agony of the Gods' inability to bring about the opportunity for Light and Darkness to be together grow, that they changed.

They started acting differently. They became stern, rough. The humans were driven to do great labors, constantly, and the Gods started arguing about how to proceed. These arguments were not new, but whereas previously they had been benign in nature, now they became ugly and unkind. The Gods started believing that the other Gods conspired to bring about the failure of their task, and they started to believe that their very nature - which they had accepted was to bring Darkness and Light together - was threatened.

Their parents spoke to them at length, and dissuaded them. They poured great effort into teaching their children that those were mistaken understandings and conceptions, but the Gods had set themselves onto the path that they, themselves, had chosen. They sought to hide from Darkness and Light, whenever they spoke of terrible, terrible things - such as murder and war - and while their parents saw everything and could not be evaded, the two felt great pain and pretended not to see.

Then, the Gods did battle. They created weapons and means of harming and killing one another, and they set out to subdue one-another in the most violent fashion possible. It was Light who was awake when that began, and she demanded that they stop, but they were driven by their

love for her. So greatly did it burn within them, yet so twisted and malformed it had become, that they could no longer understand her.

When she spoke to them, they heard her not, and thought that she had come to thank them and to bless their great efforts, to accept their love and affection and to confirm that the others were in the wrong.

And because Light could only intervene by taking away their souls, the breath that she had breathed into them, and not just of those that fought, but of all that had ever drawn their breath, she dared not do it, for to take away the souls of her children was cruel beyond measure, and it would be a deed against Darkness himself, for he had poured such immense effort into making the Gods that it was wrong, entirely, for her to do so. Not only that, but if she were to take away the souls of the Gods, then no Gods would remain, and they would never again be able to be. Such grand-scale action she wanted to avoid, and was thus forced to observe her children slaughter themselves, delusional and maddened by their warped love.

When Darkness stirred, Light was inconsolable and such immense exhaustion loomed over her, that with tears she embraced him and begged him to put an end to this. The boundless grief that her beloved was afflicted by, and the intense effort of maintaining existence that he had gone through, angered her greatly. And so, as he fell asleep, she held back the celestial bodies.

With great regret, Darkness drowned the world in herself. The black tendrils swarmed about the great cities and temples of the Gods, flooded the plains and fields, overtook all that was. Thus, the children of Light and Darkness had their lives snuffed out. Such terrible anger had never been, and would never again be.

Darkness could not kill all of them, however. She simply loved them far too much - for they were filled with Light's love - and so she spared one of them. Darkness, wracked with grief, commanded her last divine child to not repeat the mistakes of its kind. The last God promised and swore that that command would be obeyed, but the parent could not find it within herself to believe.

When Light awakened, the two embraced and profusely apologized to one another. Darkness could not forgive herself, and so she had decided that, to atone for her great evil, she would

leave the world, but remain active. She would bear the great effort of being, so that the world may continue being, and through that act of hers she would keep loving Light dearly, and through humans and their existence, they would love one another still.

Light tried to dissuade him, claiming responsibility by referring to the fact that she had asked him to do something, but he was inconsolable, and he threw himself from the world just as his exhaustion overwhelmed him. Then, everything was still for a moment. Left alone, even if with the last God, with humanity and all other living beings, Light found herself to be miserable.

Yet it seemed to matter not that Darkness was beyond the world now - for still she would succumb to exhaustion and sleep, and, doubtless, he, too, was forced to sleep, but he was so infinitely far away from her that in these moments that he spent awake, he was overwhelmed by the terrible weight of existing within nothing.

She wept for him, as she wept for the Gods, and for all that had transpired. The last God she tasked with being good, and in the deepest, darkest place she went and left a little seed. That would be the Gods' ability to do as Darkness could, and so long as they were good, they would have it. However, if they ceased to be good, they would become humans, and they would forget all they knew, and would never again be able to change the world.

Still, she loved the last God, and so she gave him the ability to love humans, and to have children with them. Then, Light threw herself from the world, resolving to do as Darkness had done.

The two were reunited, for an infinitesimally small moment, in nothingness. Such joy fluttered out from within them, that even there, where nothing was, that place which was not, was made merry and beautiful. Even where there was nothing, love coursed and filled it completely, overcoming and becoming nothing itself. They embraced one another and the great effort of being overwhelmed them.

Ever since then, Light and Darkness sleep, entwined in one another, and they dream, forever destined to crave each other's company, but to never have it.