

Darkness.

A body of a young woman hung in weightlessness. Her skin was unnaturally grey for a live being, but shone with light. Her body was covered in chills from the cold. There was a lengthy umbilical cord attached to her stomach, it seemed endless, disappearing into dark space. Light heartbeat sound was in the air. She moved her eyes from side to side, and her hands were slowly and clumsily grabbing the emptiness.

Suddenly it felt like the space around her shrank. A bright light appeared far away and rapidly started moving towards the woman along the zigzags of the cord. She got visibly nervous and tried to rip the cord off herself, but to no avail. In seconds the light entered her and her body was deformed from the unbearable pain. At that instant ancient knowledge filled her mind, and given her body a divine power.

Like a thunder in a night silence a voice said:

“Now, create!”



Darkness still.

The Creator hung in space and tried not to lose her mind from the newly obtained "gift". Her head was overflowing with information - visions, images, thought of other beings – all this multiplied and layered, overpowering her own voice. That cacophony mixed with the visions of thousands other worlds, galaxies, civilizations. Thousands of faces merged into a kaleidoscope. She'd need lots of time to at least find her own voice. But she had plenty of time. Hour after hour, fragment after fragment she regained control over this vortex of information and finally she succeeded. Overcoming pain and exhaustion, she remembered the last heard words that proclaimed "now, create!". All these visions appeared to belong to beings who were in her place a long time ago. All of them were the creators of worlds. Now it's her who had this possibility, she was given creative freedom and power to do it.

Who gave her this power? Unfortunately, this one answer was nowhere to be found in the information wasteland she now ruled over. Maybe this knowledge is lost, or maybe it was craftily cut out of the memories of her predecessors.

Even though The Creator didn't have a sense of time, it seemed to her that it's been quite a while since the moment she was given the "gift". She didn't hear any more voices. No pointers, just darkness and emptiness. She tried to call after somebody to ask what to do, but she soon understood that she is completely alone.

"What do I start with?" – she thought. It was only darkness all around her, but for a second she thought she saw something move in her range of vision. She strained her eyes and managed to see a barely visible thing stand out in the darkness right beside her. She couldn't hide her surprise and recoiled a little bit. It was hard to see the figure in detail, but The Creator felt it. Even though it was emptiness all around, this creature was able to exist in the void, which awoke Creator's curiosity. She had a question on top of her consciousness, she wanted to ask "how long have you been here?", but she ended up saying something else.

"Introduce yourself." – she filled the space around them with her ordering tone.

"Death, nice to meet you." – the being answered.

The Creator was taken aback with such a simple and blunt answer. Her mind got filled with different faces of Death she knew. Every civilization during the existence of life painted Death in its own unique way and often these images were shockingly different. The only mutual quality they bore is the inevitability of Death.

"I didn't create you. How did you end up here? Did you come after me?" – Creator interrogated Death with sharp curiosity, but she herself got amused by the last question that came out.

"I always accompany life. Where there's one, there's the other." – the Death said mildly.

"But nothing was yet created... Life doesn't exist yet."

"At least one life does exist. And it's not an immortal one, believe me. Even if you're The Creator. Everything ends eventually."

"You're speaking as if..." – The Creator started, but she went silent, looking at all the knowledge she now possessed. She couldn't find any information about previous creators dying.

"As if I saw how creators die?" – Death continued playfully. "Yes, I personally lead them to their eternal sleep."

"And you won't tell me, of course, why, how and in which circumstances they died?" – anticipating negative response The Creator asked anyway.

"True. I am trying to remain impartial and this information might give you an advantage or, on the contrary, mess with your future work. I am just doing my job here, not helping anybody." The Death finished and went silent.

After this conversation the presence of Death was more noticeable. Visually she still was more an anomaly than a material being, but she was seen because she wanted to be seen. The Creator was left with her thoughts about the conversation. It became apparent to her, that Death existed long before she came to this place, that Death met other creators and took lives in the universes made by them. The Creator started guessing that Death was most likely as powerful of a being as she was herself. A question "where do I start" was plagued with many more new ones, which didn't help the progress of creating at least something. Death noticed the struggle and broke the long silence:

"It's obvious, that being a creator of things is a hard mission, but don't complicate things. The first iteration of this world doesn't have to be perfect, it can be quite crooked, but it's still going to be done by You."

Death was dragging out her words, she was simultaneously thinking of all the previous creations she witnessed, all the previous mistakes. She was very careful about how much information she was passing on to The Creator.

"Iterations? Will I be able to create multiple times?" – The Creator asked, but her mind was filled with so many previous experiences, she already knew the answer is affirmative. Some memories of past worlds were all alike. Some faces showed up more often than others. The Universes existed in a cycle, repeatedly, one followed after another. Death dryly confirmed it.

"So perhaps you already have some ideas about the new universe? Fun facts? Exotic inhabitants? Apocalyptic weather conditions?" – looked like Death enjoyed this part especially, as she sounded enthusiastic when she spoke, which seemed weird for The Creator, since she knew about Death's repetitive experience.

The Creator, still not being able to see Death fully, stared at her outline for a moment and then started speaking.

"I've had some time to examine the experience of my predecessors and I can draw a conclusion – there are a few universal truths that exist always, even if they were not planned. Like some kind of parasitic ideas, that are being born as a result of life's existence. Light and Darkness, for instance. Eternal opponents that are not able to exists without one another. Also Emptiness, a place where neither Darkness nor Light sprouted their roots. But even without them, Emptiness always ends up being not so empty. And I was able to pin down an interesting driving force, spontaneity and wild nature of all living things, totally ineffable action – emotions, life, pure Chaos. I want to see this new universe show an accent on these powers. I think I'll start with personifying each of those forces, oh yes!"

The Creator was building her concept, feeling true passion towards ideas that were articulated. Her brain started boiling with them, they filled every corner of her consciousness.

"No one made anything like this before..." – She was beginning to feel some pride in her vision.

"It's going to be interesting to witness Chaos exist in flesh. I've seen enough of it during my living among others, both alive and dead. I've seen the rest of your concepts too – great pure deeds, dark scheming thoughts, soulless actions." – The Death was happy with Creator's idea, she couldn't help but already imagine scenarios and endings in which she'd be the reaper again, taking lives, since not even one previous world lived in peace before. Sooner or later every world is flooded with blood. The Death always had plenty of work and quite often because of murder.

The Creator was far away and didn't hear what Death had to say anymore. She was completely absorbed by her plans and constructions. Her eyes moved quickly in their sockets. Her body started to shiver, the arms spasmed, the muscles were flexed. Then her arms started moving and took the position of a cross in front of The Creator's chest.

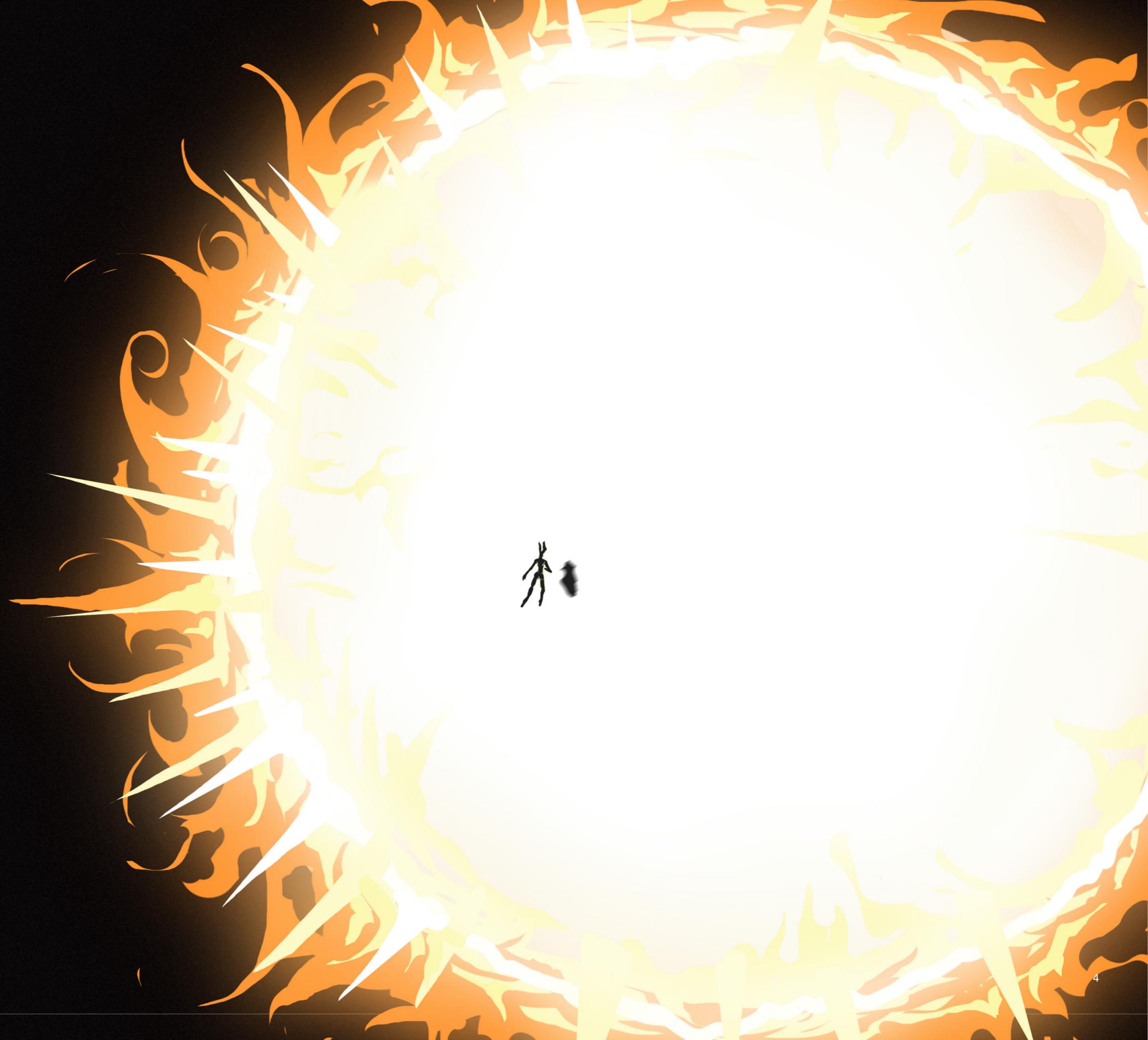
By then her eyes were burning with incredibly white light. The emptiness around her started vibrating.

The Death, feeling the fluctuations of power in space, cautiously moved herself away from The Creator. Just in case. A low humming was floating all around. The Creator spent a long while in this state in order to preserve the energy. Suddenly her eyes flew open and the humming she was spreading turned into a cracking, sounding like the ice was breaking. Death knew this sound. The arms that were crossed at Creator's chest flew open in one quick move and the darkness was split to reveal the giant body of a star. The star was on fire, its surface was spasming and throwing out tongues of fire. It took up a significant space by its sheer volume.

Two black silhouettes were hanging in the light of the erupting melted star. The Creator decided that all the warmth and light from the star is a good opportunity to catch a better glimpse of Death. She was astounded to find that Death was unchanged – still just a black cloud, absorbing everything around.

"Good start. I'm going to get a nice tan, while you're creating the rest" - Death said.

The Creator went inward again and moved on with the rest of her work.



Space, Creators Domain

Enough time has passed and the outline of the new universe was done. It was filled with various planets, cosmic bodies, universal rules of matter and everything essential for the universe to exist. It was a delicate work. From time to time everything fell off the planned track and newly made planets instantly exploded. The Creator was not able to keep an eye on everything at once, but she took this as a very joyful part of her experience.

Some planets were inhabited by the simplest organisms. Some were standing empty, even though their conditions were life friendly. Lots of things were created but the universe was hibernating, the life wasn't moving in any direction. The Creator referred to her work so far as "the base", when she spoke with Death, she treated it as a so called canvas. The first layers were put down, the background done. Now it was time for the foreground.

The Creator wasn't in a hurry to make the personifications of Light, Chaos, Shadow and Emptiness. She left this till the very end, the "accents". The overall picture she was painting was inspired by the work of her predecessors, she deemed them very on point. She understood, that creating those creatures, the gods, if you will, would kickstart the mechanism of the universe. They would be the destiny makers within the limits she puts up. But they will be ruling nonetheless. They will repaint her canvas, tear it apart, change it, according to their own outlook on life. She looked at everything she managed to create so far – endless black cosmos, stars shining like lighthouses in it.

The life was started, the time was ticking the countdown for every living thing, monotonous, but unstoppable. Death was absent from time to time in order to observe various happenings that lead to the ending of different living things. She complained about being bored "to death". But the conditions that were occurring on their own brought great satisfaction to the Creator. Those were the side effects, they made the universe more colorful. The Creator knew, that it's time to create the gods, to put the final brushstrokes down. She had to share her own powers with them, in order to make them gods. Only a small part was needed, but it had to be from her flash. She closed her eyes and looked inside herself. She reached her own chest with her hand, the place where

her heart was beating. The hand then became half transparent and, breaking the matter barrier, entered Creator's body. The powerful light shone from a place where the hand entered the chest. The Creator's face was strained and little tears rolled down her cheeks. She was pierced with pain. After a few seconds she pulled something from the inside. She opened her eyes and looked at her open palm – there were four little fragments of her heart. They were pulsing with light and bounced one against another, as if pushed apart. She looked at them with a smile, as the new feeling flooded her – a sadness of a mother, who has to watch her children go out into the world.

She brought her hand to the mouth, whispered "Go on..." and blew on the heart pieces. They flew into far away corners on the universe. As they were floating, they started to mutate, and they shone brighter as they got further away. Four new gods started living. The Creator thought about a new name, that showed up in her consciousness from all the experiences of previous creators – Demiurg, the Gods Creator. She was the Demiurg now. She smiled, exhausted, and followed the shining pieces of herself with her gaze. Death followed the Creator's fragments with her gaze too, and she got this funny feeling, that those newborns will bring her a lot of work. The rest of the picture canvas would be painted by those gods. The Creator can rest now, watching her universe.



14th Iteration from the start of this Universe. Humanity.

God's creation and failure. People gave God reasons to lose faith in his work multiple times, but this time they really outdone themselves. After a long exile, Lucifer, his favorite son, gathered an army of banished and made a visit to his father's domain – Eden. Wide spaces of snow-white squares, enormous temples and almighty walls took up the horizon. Lucifer's sons, like pools of blood on a clean carpet, were covering all this whiteness. They were demons of all shapes and sizes, the damned souls that were not abiding the world's ruling, that God established thousands years ago.

The Lucifer's army headcount was equal to the number of sinners who never managed to confess their wrongs, step on a righteous path and get to Heavens. But they ended up in Heavens now anyway, they came here as a maddened army to conquer it. Lucifer was standing among the red flood of his crowd. He drilled his eyes into God, who was sitting atop his mighty stallion among the remains of his warriors of Light, on the last small piece of Heavens not captured by the demons yet. One defeat after another, the feeling of doom grew inside God's heart.

"I made the mistake yet again, I miscounted. And Lucifer won. Could I have changed anything? Could I have saved Jesus's life? Was it possible to soothe the wrath of Lucifer?" – the thoughts were swarming in God's head, but his face remained as plain as the citadel wall. He directed his gaze up for a moment, estimated all his pros and cons and made a barely noticeable nod. He then looked to his right, where his protégé stood, Angel-Warlord Duriel.

"I am grateful for your service, my son" – said God emotionlessly. His voice was able to induce terror, it sounded like the skies are breaking apart, loud and grand, but at the same time it was calm and quiet, meant for Duriel's ears only.

"Pardon me, m'Lord?..." – the angel barely made a sound when something crashed into him with a force of a meteor falling from the sky. His life was ended there and then. The collision force turned the angel into the bloody mist and put long cracks into the white marble. The remains of Duriel flew everywhere, hit God's force field shield like shrapnel. Eventually everything got evaporated into dark fumes and dissolved, and a huge figure wrapped in smoke rose from the epicenter of the stroke. It shrugged, shining with gold and coral, brushed off the feathers and the stones, and turned its horned head towards God.

"Pardon me, m'Lord." – the new arrival said mockingly. His voice boomed, playful. The golden giant was taller than astraddle God, even when standing in the crater that he himself created. God looked to his left and said:

"You couldn't find a better landing spot, could you?"

Something like a suppressed snort sounded from the hollow giant's chest.

"You know, from the orbit it's hard to see sharply what the hell's there sitting with you – is that a pigeon or an angel. The clouds were not helping either." – Horned joked around, examining God's armor with his eye.

"Enough. Will you help me or not?"

"I am here, am I not? Show me your bad guy."

The army of demons was observing all this with awe, and even Lucifer was surprised with the spectacle. After some whispering with the stranger, God lifted his arm and pointer to the Lucifer.



His gesture was followed by the horned head turning, the eyes flaming red. The demons aren't cowards naturally, they inhabit hell after all, but this red fire gaze awoken a long forgotten feeling among demons – pure primal fear.

The giant lifted the enormous sword that was resting on his shoulder until now and pointed it upwards. The blade started spasming, as if absorbing the air around it. The demons who stood around, even quite far, felt dragged to the sword as if magnetized. The sword shone dangerously, once it absorbed enough energy. The giant was moving slowly, as if savoring the moment.

The sword in his hand lay horizontally at his shoulders level, preparing for blow. Lucifer didn't even manage to give command for his army, as the giant made a swishing shoulder strike right into the demon troops. Right that moment the bloody mist cloud rose up above the crowd and thousands of horned heads flew up in the air. Some cut off clean, some together with pieces of arms and shoulders that were used to cover the body from the hit. For a few seconds it seemed like the heads are hanging in the air, but then gravity pulled them down, washing blood rain over everyone who wasn't touched by the blade.

The demons let out an incomprehensible howl. Their hearts were snatched by pure fear and panic. The troops started to fall apart, everything was a mess, mounts of corpses with live demons that were trying to crawl on top of them and out from under the rubble, trampling others as they went.

God was looking at all this with pity. Thousands of demons were now dead, because he didn't manage to talk to Lucifer in the very beginning. So this is how it ended. But he was even more disturbed by the Giant on his side – his power was alarming, and now God owed him a favor. As if reading his mind, the Giant turned and said:

"Impressive, isn't it? Don't worry Light One, we're friends, we have each other's back..." One could hear the cynicism in the words.

"Friends..." – God said slowly, looking up at the Giant, who was looming over him. Demons screamed, squirmed and agonized all though their conversation. Suddenly the red mountains of bodies started moving, like a carpet when something is underneath it. Something was moving towards God and the Giant. They stared at the bodies intently when the warrior with a spear jumped out of the mass, fast like a lightning, throwing the dead all around. He was drenched in blood, his armor exquisite and black. He looked like a red and black oil paint brush stroke on

canvas when he moved. It was Lucifer, on the wings of hatred. He momentarily got closer and hit the Giant right in the middle of his left eye. The Giant's head was drawn back from the forceful hit for a moment and he froze. His hand, however, instantly caught the vengeful angel's throat. The head slowly straightened. There was a spear protruding from the eye, but it didn't make it even close to the lethal strike. The right eye stared at Lucifer who was hanging in Giant's hand helplessly. His neck and most of his body were covered by the hand.

"I see you've made a deal with a different devil, in order to tame your own?" – Lucifer choked.

"It shouldn't have come this far, son. Claim defeat, and we will forget about this. We have a long way to go and the sooner we start mending..." – God said with a note of pleading in his voice, but he was interrupted by Lucifer.

"No, I would rather die than bend my knee before you at least one more time! I will not serve a petty tyrant!" – the son spat out.

God again started looking for the right words, but suddenly he heard an incredibly loud cracking sound. His eyes widened. The giant squeezed the hand that was holding Lucifer and blood squirted from between golden fingers. Lucifer only croaked, shocked by how fast it happened, and his eyes went glassy. The demons, who still were panicking, heard the crushing sound and their eyes were glued to the sight of their dying ruler.

"K'htun, damn you, what have you done?!" – God screamed, taken by emotion, as the ground start trembling around him.

"You've gone soft, Light One. He told you he'd rather die. Or were you planning on hollering after me each time the puppy's loose from its leash? You remember times when you personally murdered and punished humans for lesser crimes – floods, locust? Back then you had such barbarian requests for them to fulfil, that even my metaphorical brow rose up. That was a guy I knew and respected, the creative soul, the powerful leader, the tyrant. You're merely a pale shadow of him now. Pull yourself together. Cosmos is not a place for the weak." – the giant finished his speech. He saw the rage embers in the eyes of God, but he also saw that God silently agreed.

The trembling of the ground ceased. The Giant dropped Lucifers mutilated body on the marble. The remains of Gods army behind his back were whispering with fear.

"There's still an army, you've decapitated it. Well, not you, me, more like." – K'htun winked at God with his one intact eye. – "I feel like they could use a good leader at this time. Forge it while it's hot. They're afraid of you. It gives you control. Teach them, show them how to live, who to serve, become the new Burgundy one and you'll own a great, and maybe even dangerous, force".

"What's in it for you? If you've come here to gloat and show off – I am impressed, however bitter it is to admit. I know that peace between angels and demons would be fruitful, if not for the thousand year war. Obviously. But what is your interest in this, Hollow one?" – God spat word after word angrily, expecting the truthful answer.

"I want a worthy opponent. I want somebody I can destroy proudly, not with pity, it's all i want." – said the tired Giant, finally pulling out the spear out of his eye.

"Well, this is more like the Void God" – thought God, still angrily piercing the Giant with his gaze. K'hun was always looking for adventures for himself, picked fights, meddled into wars, made genocides – just to brighten up his boring eternity. Being immortal is sometimes an unbearable torture, but also a wonderful gift, given his temperament. He could've died countless times when he misjudged his opponent or crossed the path of a wrong being. But K'htun was known for not being able to rest in death's embrace. He'd always come back, regardless who tried to destroy him, and smiled with his golden face. God had a chance to be on opposing sides with K'htun in lots of battles. Being his enemy is not a piece of cake, you have to be ready for that.

They knew each other longer than the current world existed. They both know about the way the reality works: The Creator and her visions on life lead to iterations for the universe. The life went back to square one, the starting point – the moment when the Creator's heart fragments started their path. The restart reasons varied. It could be a lack of balance from one of the four sides.

Once it was Chaos, who tried to kill The Creator and almost succeeded, and some other time it was Shadow, who reproduced so vastly, that they got close to devouring the universe and

pushing all life out of it, including The Creator herself. For a few times at the beginning it seemed weird – to live again according to the same scenario, to learn things again, to fight, to lose – but all gods got used to this with time, even though not everyone was happy with how things were. But gods were nothing comparing to the Demiurg, the owner of time and space.

Iteration after iteration the gods lived and cooperated, but anomalies or deviations made every repeat cycle different in some way. Information started recording itself on The Creator's heart fragments, so the gods had memories of all their previous lives. A *déjà vu* as long as thousands of years.

Everyone got fueled by the experience and wisdom of previous iterations as the new ones happened. They eventually started using this knowledge to get closer to their goals with each new repeat. Everyone had their own, obvious or not, goal. But The Creator was powerful enough to see all these schemes at their very starting point. She was now interested in the dynamic between God and the demons, that were just left without a leader. K'htun said, that if they combine their forces, they could be dangerous for the whole cosmos, which was true. But it surely needed to last for a lot more iterations for the Light one to put all puzzle pieces together and become a real threat worth considering. Or not? Lucifer didn't die before. God is starting a path he didn't take before.

The Creator was eager to observe this. The petty little plans of four gods were the most interesting subject for observation. Her own creations trying to change the universe she made. Her own creations, who have her a derogatory and insulting nickname – Turnkey, a jail keeper of the keys. Not Mother, not Observer, definitely not The Demiurg. They called her Turnkey, someone who locked them up in this universe and cut off any chance to run away from it. It wasn't like this in reality though, they became stronger and stronger with each repeat, meanwhile The Creator could've easily turned the time back to the primal blackness, if she only wanted to.

"These two. A Dreamer and a Tyrant. Light and Emptiness. Sometimes I just don't get K'htun's intentions." – said Death, while showing up in her favorite spot beside The Creator.

"You're referring to the help he offered the Light one? I'm sure it's part of some plan. He never does anything without a reason." - The Creator offered coldly. She smiled in a minute:

"He's onto something, and so far I can't see what it is, and this pleases me."

"Maybe the Hollow one got sentimental? All he has is Zeta and the kingdom of soulless constructs. That's a dull company, you got to agree. Maybe it really was an act of some perverted friendship?"

"You're more ancient than the universe itself and still didn't lose your faith in kindness. I'd be surprised, if I didn't know you." – finished The Creator.

It has been a long time since the original creation, 14 iterations came and went. Both of them were witnesses to billions of births and deaths. Death kept up her enthusiasm and joy of discovering news during all that time. The Creator, on the contrary, started losing interest in her creation. She got a surge of excitement only rarely, mostly when somebody tried to murder her. She was still able to recall the time when Chaos suddenly pushed through into her domain. Black knights and an ocean of purple bodies. If they were given more time, she'd most likely be dead by now. Chaos was one of the weirdest of her creations. They instantly separated from the main universe and started living outside of its limits, wandering freely in between the verses of matter. They shared this ability to move with the Bearer of Shadow Fragment.

Both Chaos and Shadow chose to live outside of the universe limits, where they can plot their intrigues away from Creator's watchful eye. It was The Creator herself who allowed them to be so free. Only by allowing them to be free creatively, she could achieve the most interesting outcomes of the universe progress. Almost every heart fragment bearer had chosen their domain by themselves.

The Empty One settled down in a rather unfavorable environment – in singularity, in the heart of a Black Hole. His body allows him to live there without issues, but it took him a lot of work to allow other creatures, whose bodies were not woven from Divine alloy, to survive in his kingdom. Chaos moved away into the space which was contradictory to material world. A space filled with millions of crazy ephemeral creatures, who feed the Chaos Majesties with their madness. Literally. The Creator observed, fascinated, how newborn Chaos Gods changed the space around them just by the sole fact of their presence. Sometimes they even changed the universal laws of matter. Her own pure and untamed power was inside each of them. The bearers of the Shadow fragment were forcefully banished from the physical space. The Creator had to do that, because the Shadow once almost conquered the whole universe with lightning speed at the slightest opportunity. It was the reason why the first iteration was referred to as the Era of Silent Slaughter. None of the other three heart fragment bearers were able to figure out what's happening in time – they ended up dead or conquered by the Shadow. To avoid repeating this history, The Creator put a curios, but effective curse on the Shadow Fragment – in order to be present in material space, they had to own a physical body. The Light One was a God that found his home on planet Earth in the Solar System. He created his race on his own and worked hard to build the world around it, establishing different peculiar rules. The Creator always respected the Light One the most, because he reminded her of herself the most. Although she was often disapproving of his methods and wanted to guide him, she never actually did. He was allowing his creation too much freedom, even though human race that required so much work from him often did him dirty and embarrassed him in front of other gods by showing him as the weakest one. But God didn't lose hope that eventually he'll find the optimal solution – the iteration in which he'll be able to keep all his resources under control. He hoped that he'll save a life where it keeps being taken away, that

he'll be able to ensure that humanity thrives. He observer the history of human race time after time. He looked at same mistakes, same wars. However, no matter how many time the tragedies repeated themselves, he didn't change anything drastically. He was afraid to change the course of history, he needed the world to keep bringing one person to him – Mary. The most precious gift of Destiny or Circumstance. She was always like a light in the darkness for him. He didn't care how many times his world crumbled and he had to start over, as long as she appeared in his life again and filled the hollowness of his heart. Unfortunately, Jesus, their baby, had to die in each iteration. God had to make peace with the fact, that saving Jesus's life meant catastrophic consequences. God was okay as long as his love stayed with him.

Singularity.

In the heart of the black hole, monolithically, without flinching, clamped by the incredible force of gravity, hung the black silhouette of the building. It was a single silhouette in the middle of the obsidian hole in the space of matter, and the extent of the structure was colossal in size. Only higher creatures could build such buildings. Blocks of meteoric ore were roughly hewn into simple geometric shapes. The building was a palace, with an open ceiling almost along its entire length. Blue lights illuminated it here and there. This realm was the possession of the golden giant. K'htun sat alone in the huge throne room, which in fact had only the throne for decor. He was a golden skeleton on a black stone, and absolute silence around. He was thinking about something for a long time. His single eye moved from time to time, clinging to the interior of the room. His gaze fixed on a small object to his left. It was also a throne, but more humble and smaller in size. It belonged to Zetta. Zetta was the only son of K'htun, he was, as his father hated to be reminded, artificially created. K'htun created him by his own image. The divine metal gave Zetta life, but the presence of such a son did not bring the expected result to the Empty One. He did not feel the joy of his son's company, nor the presence of a kindred spirit. Zetta also felt this very well - although he was a construct, he was still endowed with a soul.

"I wonder where you are hanging out now, son?" K'htun drawled, exaggerating his interest. After that question was in the air, his gaze slid to the right where Zetta's throne was empty. Zetta's missing intrigued him. A stifled laugh flew out of the hollow chest and one eye began to glow more brightly. The newly formed idea filled K'htun's brain like a wave.

"He will rage, that's for sure. Because of his helplessness. But I have to wait for the right moment. And, given the recent successes, there was not much time left to wait" K'htun was speaking more animatedly into the empty throne room.

K'htun was talking to himself in the emptiness of the throne room and only the disinterested would miss out on hearing his thoughts. But the only ones who could hear him were the constructs – metal slaves, without will and mind, and someone else who was in the palace. Zetta heard every word, although not all words made sense to him. He stood silently, in the shadows of black blocks that formed the corridor leading to the throne room. He often visited

his father to listen to his mad speeches into the void. It also hurt him to understand that his father chose to talk to himself more often than sharing his plans with his son, not to mention just simply talking to him. But it was Zetta's fate, with which he had made peace a long time ago.

"This time you sound as if you have planned something cunning and really mean. I wonder why now?" Zetta, unlike his father, did not voice his thoughts and kept them to himself. He also did not want to advertise his presence, waiting to hear new details, but K'htun had already collected himself and continued to sink into his thoughts in silence.

"Waiting for the end of the world? Does he want to provoke a new Iteration?" The very thought of this surprised Zetta a little. Usually they worked to ensure that the iteration lasted as long as possible, since restarting was always a difficult process. Starting everything from the beginning meant living anew, learning, gaining skills, experience, scars, losses. Zetta also retained the memory of previous iterations, thanks to K'htun's prescient engineering mind.

The only constant fact from iteration to iteration was Zetta's relationship with his father. Complete misunderstanding. Sometimes Zetta could not grasp the essence of his existence at all, why had he already been created 14 times, and still had never been appreciated. What were the reasons for recreating him in each new iteration, given all the repetitive failed experiences? Did the father still cherish the hope of creating a son differently? These questions did not leave Zetta for a minute, turning his existence into one continuous expectation of something. Waiting for answers to unasked questions.

Several days passed after the decisive battle involving K'htun and God. Hearing the Empty One's advice and adopting it, God was leading the remnants of the angelic army when they visited Lucifer's house without delay. "Forge it while it's hot." God came down to Earth and found the gate to Hell, which had been hidden from human sight since time the dawn of time. With one blow he split the ground in front of him, creating a crack of incredible size. Vapors erupted from the split, as if from a ravaged still living beast. Standing on the edge of the precipice, he saw thousands of small lights below - the eyes of the demons were all directed upwards, looking at a silhouette of light that gazed at them from the outline of a crack. Demon eye's filled with horror.

There were still lots of various demons in Hell, from simple souls and ordinary imps to powerful demon barons who ruled Hell during Lucifer's absence. But considering the death of the latter, all of them expected the worst - the total extermination of them as species and the domination of Heaven. And now this moment has come. They began to stir and an rose an incredible racket. Someone fell to his knees, waiting for death, someone fled to an unknown place, someone grabbed a weapon. Some stood motionless, considering the situation. But God and the angels never attacked. They fell through the crack down like snow, levitating easily and landing softly. The demons formed a circle around them, outnumbering them. However, no one in their right mind dared to attack God's army.

God's gaze found the barons of hell, who rose in the midst of demons. The first to step out from among them was Asmodeus - demon-fighter who had hundreds of murdered humans and angels on his account. His neck was covered with dozens of halo rings taken from dead angels - a provocative element to say the least... God's eyes slid over this "jewelry" for a moment. God knew who Asmodeus was and he had to overcome the urge to squish him on the spot. Instead, he held out his hand for a handshake. The astonishment of the demons was hard to describe. Even Asmodeus, who in all his appearance did not show any worry, felt the significance of this action. "Peace". Sinners and Angels stared at their hands and everyone understood that a new Era has begun. Asmodeus knelt down and bowed his head, and soon all the demons around him repeated the gesture. God looked around for the first time he saw the crimson sea of various sizes and shapes being calm, everyone was on their knees, silently obeying the new Lord.

"Is this what I've been longing for forever? Peace, at the cost of the lives of both my sons, earthly and infernal?" he thought.

"The time has come to build our common future. Together we will reach for the stars and those who hide behind them to seal our progress forever." God's gaze was directed upwards and reached far beyond the borders of the planet. His vision caught a small red glow on the vast sheet of space. He was being watched. The process of assimilation of demons into the ranks of God's army began that day. The whole order of life has changed. God returned to people and presented them with demons as new brothers of angels. To say that it was a shock is an understatement. Many thought it was a trick of the demons, but if only it were that simple.

The church was forced to work on its classic stories and teachings about heaven and hell - some of them were now completely out of date. An even bigger surprise awaited people after death. From now on they all went to hell, regardless of lifestyle, beliefs and sins. Archangel Peter was waiting for them along with Abbadon, the Lord of the Abyss. The angel reassured the innocent souls and explained that they were where they should be. From now on, hell was not a place for soul torture, but a checkpoint. God ordered to collect the most intelligent and wisest heads to help him learn more about the world, but not only that. The "not only" part was key, because humanity managed to summon power from outside the ordinary world created by God. People called this ability occultism. The forces they appealed to were not always of hellish origin. Their supplications reached the cosmos, and their prayers awakened forces that God had no idea about. But also God did not want to wait for the wise of this world to die, so He invited them to heaven without wait. Some of the invitees felt great stress and excitement while being in Eden, since none of them expected to end up here, in life or especially after death. The army of angels has thinned out over all the ages of war with demons, therefore recruitment was taking place among people, living and dead, to replenish the living resource.

Everything worked as one huge, well-tuned mechanism. For the first time God began to feel hope. "Here it is - the sequence I've been looking for so long." said God quietly, lying on the sheet. His armor lay on the floor scattered here and there around the bed. The room was very modest, ascetically furnished, the walls were plastered with clay, window hung with cloths. He dimmed the light emitting from his body and now his marble skin was visible, streaked with gold where the veins showed through. The eyes, shimmering with living gold, stared at the ceiling. He was not alone in bed - a woman lay on his chest, resting her head close to God's heart. He turned his head to her and said, smiling "We have been going to this for so long, Maria. Time after time, crash after crash."

"But you didn't stop. And then you continued to overcome this streak of unsuccessful attempts, which, according to your words, lasted for thousands of years, my dear. And this is a determination that the world has not seen yet" said Maria gently, raising her eyes and meeting his gaze. She was tired, but she smiled back. Her skin was also pale, with dark veins appearing here and there, reminiscent of tree branches that had shed their leaves. Gold, however, was also visible in her eyes, it slowly flowed around, each time giving her eyes a new shade. A long time ago, when God was just planning to have a child with her, he endowed her with a part of his power so that she could endure the birth of a demigod painlessly, and most importantly, endure it at all. It was their little secret, the less people knew about Maria's status, the safer it was for everyone.

"If it weren't for you, if it weren't for your love and devotion, I would have stopped a long time ago. Thanks to you, I am on the right path and will not deviate from it."

"I don't know why you chose me, there are loads of prettier and smarter women around." Teasingly, she stretched and got up from the bed. Her skin contrasted with the interior. She was braiding her hair with a ribbon, turning her back to God. He measured her body with his eyes and said nothing. A smile crept across his face, and his eyes were constantly gliding over her figure.

"Don't stare at me, you won't find anything new there." She picked up her clothes from the ground and covered herself with them, throwing a mockingly condemning look at him. "And seriously, what now?"

She went to the window and pulled back the edge of the cloth with her finger, looking down the street. Leaning on the windowsill, she waited for an answer. He was in no hurry to speak, so there was silence. His eyes slid from one place to another, but after a moment they seemed to freeze. "We will stop the Creator. Let's stop this endless circle." God's eyes stared at the wall. The gaze became alienated. "I saw you being born so many times, I repeated the process of creating everything on Earth so many times, just to find you. Any deviation from the established process, and you disappear. In those moments I felt as if I was losing the will to live. Each time I played the same role, but I have grown out of it. I was sick of being a slave to some entity. And I will find answers to my questions. I will find a way. I will take away her power to manipulate time, and I will stop my destiny."

God's monologue stunned Maria a little. But she was in love with exactly this version of the Light One - confident, perhaps even arrogant, but determined. A God who has hope.

"While you're still mastering the power of the Creator, please start leaving my bed. Joseph will come soon. But it seems to me that he already guesses about us anyway." She began to collect things scattered on the floor and approached God. He was already sitting on the edge of the bed. Putting her arms around his head, she kissed his forehead. In response, he wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her. A moment later, after collecting his armor, he raised his hand up and got illuminated by a pillar of light.

"Love you." - said God quietly and dissolved in the light ray. The room fell into darkness and the only source of light was a curtained window. Maria smiled for a moment, but soon continued to clean the room before her husband's arrival. Having put the house in order, she went out to hang the laundry outside. A huge wicker basket filled with wet clothes was waiting in the corner of the room all this time.

Taking it under her arm, Maria looked out into the street, still watching for the unwanted attention of a stranger eye. After making sure it was all clear, she left the house and went to the backyard. But not even a moment passed when she felt that she was being watched. She carefully looked around her. Although no one was visible, the instincts were not calming. She involuntarily looked up and her eyes lingered on something strange. In the middle of the sunny blue sky, between

fluffy white clouds a star shone with bright red light. Maria felt in her gut that this was a bad sign, and goosebumps ran over her body. She quickly finished the chore and quickly returned to the house. The feeling of presence did not let go of her, even within the walls of her own home.



Eden.

God returned to the kingdom of heaven. People led by angels were rushing here and there, demons were visible at every corner solving various issues. It was still strange for God to see demons in the middle of heaven. It reminded him of the iterations where they broke into Eden to conquer it, led by Lucifer. God himself was close to destruction back then. But for the moment they had a place here. He walked through the white marble squares, looking at everyone around. Endless parks, snow-white trees. He felt joyful as he surveyed the current state of his home. Humans, demons, angels - all worked as one, all efforts were made to achieve His goal. This sight gave him hope and pride.

A majestic building of white stone appeared on the horizon. It was the largest among others built in the sky. The towers rose far up in the fluffy clouds, reaching for the sun. The windows were decorated with detailed stained glass. Guardian angels stood at the magnificently decorated entrance gates, carved from the stone. They quickly bowed to God when he approached. He barely nodded in response and entered the palace.

The first thing that immediately was noticeable was the smell of sewage. It was powerful and saturated with different shades - sulfur and urine, blood and burnt incense. God ignored this and moved on. All the windows were covered with fabrics, stopping the daylight from entering the room. The only sources of light were hundreds of candles burning and smoldering in the closed space, forming a thick impenetrable smoke. It hindered visibility, but God didn't care. The luxurious carpets that used to cover the floor were stained with substance of various shades and textures.



Surfaces that were not covered with carpets glistened in the candlelight. God ignored the state of his own palace and confidently headed to the central hall to the majority of the people inside. He came here once every few days to check the progress of his subjects in occult practices. Two angels came by and bowed their heads to greet him, while carrying heavy loads. They carried a dozen mutilated and disfigured human bodies. A thin trickle of blood trailed behind the angels, who were quickly heading in the direction of the dungeons of the palace. Entering the arch that led to the central hall, God stopped. The sight surprised him a little. The entire hall was filled with people praying. They prayed, but they didn't pray to Him. All of them stood, sat, lay near the newly formed altars, which were filled with various sacrifices. God glanced over these offerings - flowers; fruits, fresh and already rotten; handmade figurines - made of wood, stone, metal; packages wrapped in blood-stained material; dead animals, birds, fish. But it only got worse as he walked further. Other offerings were the bodies of people with cut out organs, mutilated limbs, disfigured beyond recognition. There were also the bodies of angels mixed with demons. The latter would probably not be delighted if they saw this. But the most grotesque thing in the eyes of God was a huge monument made from sewn together bodies. It stood almost in the center of the room and most of the people gathered at its' foot. The prayers were difficult to understand and God could not recognize the spoken language. He carefully approached the people. They did not notice his presence, repeating the same prayer lines, as if in a trance. Although it did not occur to him immediately, God was now able to see that the altar bodies were sewn together to outline the shape of an eye. This whole picture was not to God's liking.

Is this the price for knowledge? Are these sacrifices necessary? And what if no one answers?" His thoughts superimposed on each other at the sight of distorted bodies forming that pedestal. God was distracted for a moment and began to recall his previous attempts to master his own destiny, to set things right, to find answers. He remembered how difficult and thorny the path had been up to this moment. How often he lost Maria. How often he contemplated the death of Jesus. Hatred of Lucifer. How many people were killed in His name. How many defeats he suffered while trying to follow a peaceful path. This time he went very far, and he was never left by the feeling that he was one step away from the answers he was looking for. Snapping out of his thoughts, he caught himself not taking his gaze off the "eye" pedestal all this time. The meat sculpture attracted the attention of everyone around. Finally looking away, he began to search with his eyes for the angel who was the guardian here. Remiel, a faithful child who never demanded any answers and did not undermine God's motives, even at the sight of dead fellow angels. Remiel served faithfully throughout his life and was usually responsible for the defense of the Sky Bastions. Now his mission was no less important - to watch over people and whatever they can summon with their prayers from the blackness of space. God nodded to Remiel, and he came out of the dark alcove hall into the candlelight, taking a place by God's left hand.

"It looks terrible Remiel, doesn't it?" said God with a hint of guilt.

"We have seen worse things, My Lord. But such is the price of the knowledge you seek." answered the encouraging angel.

"Is it selfish to waste other people lives and souls for my own purpose? I'm not even sure it will bear any fruit." God looked over the people who were praying, over the corpses of sacrificed. Every time his eyes returned to the pedestal.

"You gave them life, My Lord. You have the right to take it away." Remiel answered calmly.

"Were there any incidents, maybe some results while I was absent?"

"Alas, My Lord, none. Everything is as usual - some cannot stand it and die during prayer, some die from fatigue. Well, you can see the rest yourself - they are in a trance, mumbling things that are incomprehensible to us." answered the angel, rubbing his neck.

"Thank you, child. Keep up the good work. Maybe I should think of other ways to do things. Occultism has not shown itself from the best side so far, I'll be honest. Especially when humans summoned the demons recently, with whom we communicate now on a daily basis anyway, without having to kill sheep for it." God said, laughing. But the smile quickly disappeared from God's face and was replaced by disappointment and weariness. He nodded to Remiel in farewell and, turning his back to the pedestal, decided to leave this stinking place. He felt that the longer he stayed here, the more this stench would permeate him.

He did not have time to take even a single step, as one of the occultists who had been sitting in a trance all this time, suddenly stood up so sharply that the sound of his atrophied legs crunched throughout the hall. It looked as if the marionette had been roughly pulled up. God turned to look at this man, but he noticed something else instead. The eye pedestal began to glow. The purple light broke through the bodies, the wounds, the seams. The occultist, who rose up sharply, hung as a dark silhouette on a shining background. The pedestal gained more brightness with every second, illuminating almost the entire hall. For the first time in a long time, God squinted at the brightness and Remiel put his hands with the spear towards the pedestal, trying not to look at the light. God covered his eyes with his hand and noticed that all the other people who were praying immediately stopped doing so and simultaneously began to cover their eyes with their hands. He thought they also protected their eyes from the incredibly bright light. But then he turned to the nearest occultist and saw him reach his fingers into his eye sockets. Dirty nails entered under the eyelid and pushed further. Blood gushed out of the eyes, but the occultist kept digging his fingers into his own skull until there was a soft crunch and the eye was squeezed into his palm. Both eyes. Despite all this, the man did not make a sound, constantly smiling at the pedestal. A face full of joy with two bloody holes. Blood spurted from the eye sockets, flooding his face with dark blood.

Everyone in this hall simultaneously raised both hands with their eyes in their palms, like an offering, directing it towards the pedestal. It looked like a field of very disgusting flowers. God suppressed his feelings at that point, but what he felt mainly was the fear of the unknown. He hadn't felt fear in a long time. He remembers a similar sensation from when he first met K'htun a millennium ago.

The only occultist now standing in front of the pedestal cracked his jaw as if he was trying to adjust it for something other than speech. A voice was heard.

"Were you looking for my audience, the Light One?" the occultist's jaw dropped smoothly. "Because all these tiny creatures prayed with the same pledge to the stars. Looks like you seek knowledge and those who possess it."

The voice that rang out from the broken jaw was clear, not even an echo. With each word the pedestal lit up a little brighter and dimmed when the words ended, resonating with the conversation.

"Forgive me, but I do not know with whom I have the honor to speak" God spoke. He felt the thrill of meeting the unknown, he could not recognize his opponent. He knew most of the inhabitants of the cosmos, but this one seemed completely unfamiliar to him.

"I am the one who knows how to master your destiny. Is that what you want?" the voice continued



very calmly. God glanced at Remiel and noticed that he did not take his eyes off the pedestal for even a moment. They were bleeding.

"Let your warrior relax, I'm here with an offer" said the entity.

God put his hand on the angel's shoulder. Remiel hesitated for a second, but lowered his spear and covered his eyes with his hand, barely enduring the pain caused by the light.

"I want to free myself from this yoke. Surely you know about the cyclical nature of the existence of our universe, stranger? So, that's enough for me, I want to live here and now." God finished, taking a step towards the pedestal.

"So you just want to stop this cycle, or do you wish for the death of the Demiurge behind it all?" said the entity. Surprisingly, this question arose for the first time in God's mind. Does he want to just live in one iteration, or does he want to kill the Creator? The very thought of killing the Creator repulsed him a little. Although the Demiurge manipulated time as she pleased, she had the right to do so - this universe was her creation. These thoughts upset God a little because he could easily see the parallels between him and the Creator.

"I want to stop the cycle and that's it." said God firmly.

"That would mean that you chase after the Creator's job" it sounded as the entity was having fun.

"Despite the fact that she created you. If she didn't, Maria would not have been born either? And now you're paying her back like this, good reward, don't you think?" the voice finished, waiting for the reaction. God shuddered slightly when he heard Maria's name, but the fact of this knowledge was not surprising from a being who speaks through corpses and hears prayers in space. This entity clearly saw a bigger picture even before it offered its services to God. If this is all some evil joke, God will find this joker and bring hell to him, literally.

"I understand what consequences of this decision can be expected. And I'm ready to accept them. But if I manage to stop the cycle - I won't need anything else. Perhaps the Creator will thank me for taking away such a burden from her. Who knows." God said. The entity snorted at the word "thank".

"How merciful. In this case, I will need your most capable angels." – the voice replied calmly. God looked at the bodies lying around the pedestal, and also glanced in Remiel's direction. The angel heard the entity's request but showed no sign of concern.

"You need more sacrifice?" God asked with slight concern.

"No. I need angels to teach them and explain the intricacies of the ritual. You will also be needed there. And these people, who are now holding out their own eyeballs for me, will suit me as sacrificial material, but I need more. I adore listening to their thoughts, filling them with poison, savoring their hysteria. It is not so easy with angels, thanks to Your skills their mind is an impenetrable fortress." the entity had finished its demands list.

God was still holding on to the thought that this could all be no more than a joke, no more than an empty farce, but he was ready to try anything. Step by step - closer to the goal. He glanced once more at the bodies and people holding the eyes. Now was not the time to turn back.

"Agreed. How should I address you?" God said, approaching the pedestal, going around the broken occultist body, who was still standing on bony legs.

"Liberator. I'm the one, who cuts off your chain." The entity said with pleasure. After these words, the pedestal light went out. The entity left.

The room was filled with darkness, and it was impossible to see anything for a moment, due to the drastic change of lighting. But as soon as God was able to see the room again, a cry of pain was heard, followed by another one. Gradually, people began to come out of the trance and started feeling the pain of the wounds they inflicted on themselves. The screams became a

cacophony and people began to fall to the floor helplessly, looking for help. The floor was covered with a living carpet of agonizing bodies, pushing against each other, begging for help and death at the same time. It became apparent that they were calling specifically for God to help them. He glanced at Remiel, who was slowly regaining his eyesight. The angel looked at God through his blood-stained eyelids and understood what he had to do without words. He raised his spear and walked over to the people writhing on the floor.

"The Liberator. Who is he?"

The Creator asked Death with obvious concern, but not really expecting any answer. She watched the ritual from start to finish. The successes of the Light One captivated her attention. She followed his every move from the moment he made the alliance with demons. His steps became more confident that's for sure. And now there is also this mysterious pact with some "Liberator". The creator could not find this entity among the blackness of the universe, as if it was hiding from Her and her all-seeing eye. How was it even possible was a mystery to the Demiurge.

"Well, for sure, this is someone who does not wish you well, let's start with that" Death answered calmly.

"This is a bluff." Said the Creator. Her chin was raised, and her jaw muscles flexed slightly.
"It is so obvious, that it is just a blatant lie in order to use the Light One. But, hypothetically, what if it isn't?" asked the Reaper. "Is there a possibility that this new entity, the Liberator, or whatever it is called, has the power to stop you? Are you really ready to take such a risk? We have met guests from outside this universe more than once. And some of them were strong enough to pose a threat to the order of things. Just think of the Null- giants."

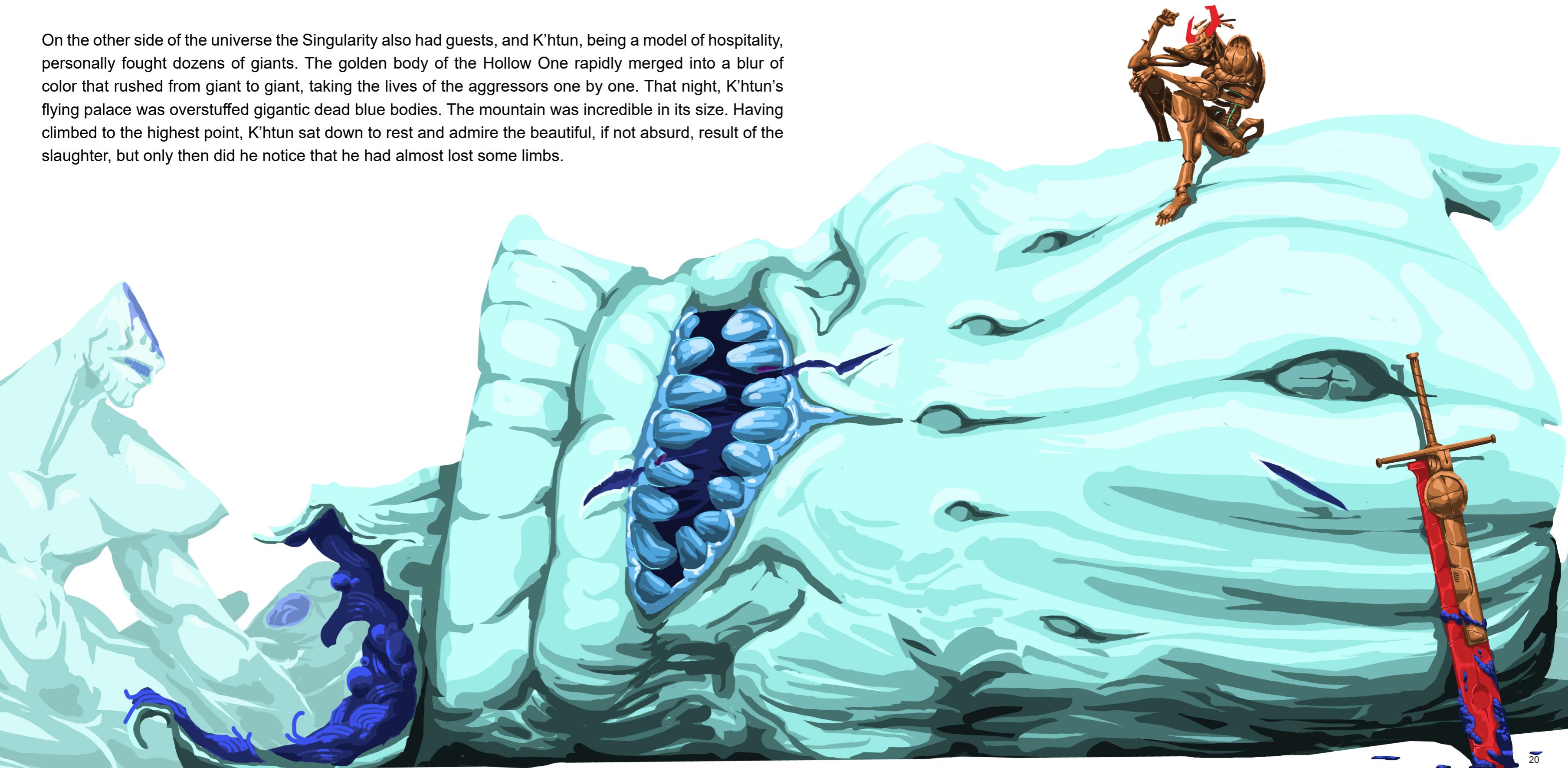
The picture emerged from the Creator's memory by itself. During the time of the ninth iteration, when chaos was raging in the universe and engulfing entire planets, an invasion occurred. A humanoid with a strange artifact appeared within the solar system.

At that moment, the Creator was very interested in the newly arrived guest, but curiosity quickly changed to wariness. With the help of an artifact-blade, he began to fly around Mars, cutting the matter as he went. In an instant, he created a huge hole in space, which emitted pillars of light at first. But behind the light, huge bodies of a deadly blue shade began to fall out, clustered together in one huge ball. From a distance, it looked as if the matter of the universe had its stomach gutted and the intestines were falling out.

The first giants landed on Mars and simply crushed it with their weight and number. In a matter of moments the planet collapsed. All heart fragment bearers felt the ruination of the planet. Especially God, who managed to become an eyewitness to this while in Eden. The flash was so powerful that for a moment Eden looked like hell in the hot yellow light of the planet destruction. The blue giants began to build something on burning Mars, and some of them began to travel to neighboring planets.

The Light One was the first to meet them. Only several giants flew to Earth, but it was enough to cause total chaos. Lucifer, although not allied with his father at the time, still took the side of the Earth's defense at the time of the invasion. Many Angels and Demons died in that battle, but humanity survived. But the most precious soul was lost that day - Maria died in that massacre.

On the other side of the universe the Singularity also had guests, and K'htun, being a model of hospitality, personally fought dozens of giants. The golden body of the Hollow One rapidly merged into a blur of color that rushed from giant to giant, taking the lives of the aggressors one by one. That night, K'htun's flying palace was overstuffed gigantic dead blue bodies. The mountain was incredible in its size. Having climbed to the highest point, K'htun sat down to rest and admire the beautiful, if not absurd, result of the slaughter, but only then did he notice that he had almost lost some limbs.



The creator watched this sudden cataclysmic event unravel. She admired how it looked like – as if the universe had decided to cleanse itself with the help of strangers. But while contemplating ruins in all the corners of the universe, the Creator did not notice how the original humanoid, who created a hole in matter earlier, created another hole within the limits of her possessions. It should be almost impossible to get into her domain. His blue body peered out of the portal. At that moment, the Creator realized that she was under attack, but it was too late - through the newly formed hole, null-giants began to emerge at a breakneck speed.

There were hundreds of meters between the portal hole and the Creator. She managed to see a smile on the humanoid's face before he disappeared back into the portal. The first thing the Creator did then was a barrier around herself, but the giants had already rushed to the barrier like hungry sharks at the smell of blood. They hit the barrier shield with incredible force and began to surround it from all sides. In a moment every inch of the protective sphere was covered with blue flesh. The sphere often protected the Creator at critical moments, giving her time to think of a plan. But the crunch that was heard at that moment greatly surprised Her. The sphere actually began to crack.

This barrier was able to withstand the death of a star in the past, the attack of Chaos and The Era of the Silent Slaughter, but the blue giants clearly possessed a power from beyond this world. They had already begun to destroy the sphere.

The Creator understood that there was only one way out - a new iteration had to be launched. As she began reset the process, the sphere got filled with a hum - the low voices of the giants uttering the single word "Null. Null. Null". The moment when the sphere gave way, the Creator stopped feeling the surrounding world. Her body exploded with primordial light - the giants vanished along with the previous iteration. But the threat they imposed remained forever in the Creator's memory.

The question hung in the air. "Are you really ready to take such a risk?" The Creator knew that it is impossible to lose control over the power given to Her from above, even for a moment. Several iterations ago she had to stop the process of creating life in the universe for a little while. She had to do it out of fear for her own life. The Creator held four fragments in stasis and thus the universe was incomplete, which in itself did not pose any danger to her - it was a small oasis in the midst of the chaos created by Her. It was the pause she needed to gather her strength. But it didn't last long - the voice, that she heard long time ago once she woke up, turned to her again and he was clearly unhappy with how things were.

"You have to create, period. If you stop or lose control of your creation, it will mean that you are not worthy of our Gift. We will take this power away. And you will become nothing. Again." The message was clear and did not have any double meaning – she were to continue iterations or die for nothing.

Since then, the Creator often thought about these words. Who were the creators before her awakening? Did all creators die because higher beings took away their power? There was no one to ask about it. Death was always silent and did not reveal anything superfluous. And the question to the "higher power" did not end in success.

Iterations were an obvious defense mechanism, but after a certain repeat, the Creator began to notice that they were not given to her for nothing - she was going through too much tension and you could actually see the wear and tear of the Creator's body. A vicious circle - create to live. Sacrifice your life to avoid being killed. If earlier she perceived this power as a gift, now it was a heavy burden, even a curse.

"The Light One can take away my control over the flow of the universe. I cannot allow this. His motivation is clear to me, but it is unacceptable." said the Creator coldly.

"But also, if it's all a bluff, I am overthinking this for nothing." the Creator shook her head, as if trying to shake off the thoughts. She followed the Light One for some time, struggling with slowly growing anxiety.

Unknown space.

The darkness of space. The two entities met away from any prying eyes.

- Is everything ready for the ritual? - said the smaller entity.

- So. He is ready. - replied the entity that radiated violet light.

- During the ritual, you must call yourself Null.

- Null? The father of the Null Giants? Interesting. - the purple entity was a little surprised by the request.

- This is enough, "Liberator". - the smaller entity finished and dissolved in space. The liberator remained at the meeting place for some time, but soon dissolved as well.

A month has passed since the appearance of the Liberator. Dozens of Angels were sent to training, and thousands of people to slaughter. The "Eye" was insatiable and demanded more and more every day.

God was waiting for news about the completion of preparations and never visited the ritual hall again. He still remembered the stench of bodies and filth. But he could still hear people pleading to him even outside the palace. Prayers mixed with cries for help, delusions, frank schizophrenia

- the touch of the Liberator had a detrimental effect on minds. The wait frankly annoyed God, but he was willing to suffer. A hostage to circumstances or the culprit of one's own suffering? Duality. God could not decide for himself who he is.

He heard an angel approaching. God was sitting on a marble bench in the garden, among snow-white trees. He liked to isolate himself there. White petals fell from the branches and the wind whirled them in the air until they fell to the ground. The sterility of the surrounding environment contrasted strongly with God's thoughts. Gabriel, the messenger of heaven, walked towards him with a confident step. Before coming closer, the angel slowed his pace and bowed his head on the last step.

"Gabriel." The Light One nodded to him in response. He gestured for the angel to come closer.

"Master. The time has come - the Liberator is calling." Gabriel said it formally, but from the expression on his face you could understand that he was worried about this message.

"This is my chance for a normal life, son. I'm not happy with the price either. Believe me." God spoke.

"I'm afraid that this Liberator" - angel's fingers showed imaginary quotation marks on the last word - "could be a servant of the Creator and maybe a murderer."

Gabriel was worried and allowed himself a more emotional tone. "We were close to losing you, losing everything we have. Lucifer was here in heaven and he came for you. I was frightened by the very thought that the Crimson One could win and end your existence. But this Liberator terrifies me more."

"Me too." God smiled.

This answer amazed Gabriel. He wanted to add something, but the angel was at a loss for words.

"Let's go, son. My destiny awaits." God got up from the bench and, patting the angel on the shoulder, headed for the palace.

The hall where the pedestal was located was crowded. People were kneeling everywhere. Angels who were chosen for training stood around the pedestal. They left their armor outside the hall, and stood naked in the dim candlelight. Their bodies were covered with various inscriptions and illustrations. Many of those were drawings of an eye, clearly the dominant visual element, the sign of the Liberator. God looked over the faces of the angels. Their eyes were like glass, looking somewhere in the distance, far beyond the palace, maybe even this reality.

God stepped into the hall, and the angels who did not participate in the ritual began to push and shove people who were praying or in a trance, making way for the Lord. He was heading towards the pedestal, which was emitting a more gentle light than the first time. Violet light bounced off hundreds of human faces, dancing on their skin. The only thing where the light did not leave its mark were the eyes of all these people, or rather the black holes that remained instead. The eyes could not bear to look directly at the Liberator, so they got rid of them. As before, the pain was dulled by the trance and hypnotic effect of the entity.

This time it did not affect God at all. He walked through the newly created alley closer to the pedestal. There was a circle of angels between him and the pedestal, all with the symbols of the Liberator on their bodies. As soon as he approached, the circle opened and he entered it. The entire floor, which was previously out of sight because of all the angels standing there, turned out to be covered with the eyes of people praying in this hall. All these eyes sparkled from the flickering candles and in the light of the pedestal, purple flames reflected on wet surfaces. In a moment, the light shone at full power again and a voice was heard.

"Bend the knee, Light One." A voice rang out, but it was said by many people at once. God understood that the angels were also in a trance and that they too spoke simultaneously with the voice of the Liberator. God thought about it for a moment, but agreed. His legs were covered

in armor, he could feel the eyeballs on the floor bursting under his weight as he dropped to his knees.

"Well, at least it only cost us the eyes." God thought.

"Repeat after me, Light One." said the Liberator, still broadcasting his voice through the angels. The angels began to move - each placed his left palm on the next angel covering the neighbor's right eye. "Four dead universes." God repeated the essence.

"Three crazy architects. Two ends of the world and one soul. My own. It was all devoured by Null." said the entity.

"Null?" God instantly came to his senses. Those giants once almost destroyed his land, but what's worse, they killed Maria. A part of him wanted to stop the ritual immediately. But the second, more rational part of him kept him on his knees, in front of the killer of his beloved. In this iteration she is alive, and perhaps by a strange coincidence the one who once killed her will now help God not to lose her. His thoughts were quickly dispelled because an incredible beam of light began to shine from the pedestal. Everyone - angels and people who were in a trance could not stand this light and began to scream, and their bodies began to burn. Only God, standing on his knees, did not feel any discomfort, as if he was in the eye of the storm. This light killed people almost instantly, and the angels writhed for a few more seconds, burning alive. From the pedestal, directly from the light, something began to appear. God realized that he could calmly, without covering his eyes, contemplate this. A finger emerged from the light, and then the second one. In a moment, the whole hand up to the elbow was inside the palace.

"Come here, Light One. Brace Null's hand with your lips." said the Liberator, the voice coming from the pedestal-portal.

"This is Null."

If everything seemed distant and a little insignificant before, now the Creator was alarmed. The ritual has already gone far enough, and if this is indeed the God of the Null Giants, then he possesses incredible power. It seemed to the creator that Null could also be a demiurge, but from another world, an evil and a strong sibling. Death watched as the Creator moved in space, back and forth. Death wanted to appease the Creator, but could not find the words. This is an obvious threat to the post of the Creator. The demiurge stopped abruptly.

"I already gave the Light One a huge head start. And he, the scoundrel, managed to beg for an audience with Null." said the Creator angrily. "It is not clear what I expected."

"You couldn't know." said Death calmly.

"I am the Creator! I am all-knowing, all-seeing, omnipresent!" cried the Demiurge. Death did not react to the aggressive response of the Creator. They both understood that this was not the case. Her child forms an alliance with her nemesis under her nose. Death saw how sparks began to move through the Creator's body. The reaper curled up and got ready.

The entire hall was flooded with light from the pedestal, and the walls began to turn black from the intensity of the light. Other pedestals, carpets, curtains, furniture - burned with purple flames. God rose from his knees and walked towards the pedestal. He stepped over the charred corpses of angels and the bodies of people that had already begun to crumble into bones. He felt that the light emitted by the Liberator pressed against him and tried to push him away. But with each step he gained more determination - he knew that Null was incredibly strong and he would definitely be able to help him stop the Creator. There were only a few steps left, but God heard an incredible noise outside. This noise was familiar to him - he had already heard it a dozen times. The sound of the universe erasing.

The Light One understood that his time was running out, so he made every effort to reach the hand of the Liberator. But the light emanating from the pedestal was incredibly strong, and the steps were barely doable. Step by step, he could hear matter collapsing behind him and his body weakening. During the closing iterations, the bodies of the Fragment bearers are degraded to their original state. God made a last effort to crawl to the hand of Null's on all fours, but he didn't have time. He was only a few steps away from realizing his dream. Space dissolved. The iteration was completed by the Creator.