

## **The birth of light – Andasha**

Luna Ma Narama

In the beginning all things upon the earth sat beneath a vast, and empty sky. The heavens we know now to filled with stars, once were the home of naught but the dark, and the silence. A great and peaceful nothing.

Beneath this nothing, people walked the earth without sight, learning in the early years to stay close to what they knew. It was forbidden to wander beyond the reach of the tribes grasp as some had been known to stray, and never return.

There was much fear of what terrors might roam just beyond the next shadow. Mothers would whisper of hungry, heavy-legged beasts, and the winged horrors heard sometimes in distant winds. Trembling, wide eyed children would bare themselves closer to their kin, quietly promising themselves to never get lost in the dark.

And so all lives passed this way: snuffed out where they had begun. New borns grew old, and died, never too far from the touch of family, always shrouded in the knowledge that all beyond familiar reach, was dangerous, and deadly.

All lives passed this way but one. The life of Tullo. When she was born in the dark, she entered this place baring the mark of shadows. For Tullo was blind. Where her eyes should have grown to stretch wide with fright, Tullo bore only lids, woven tight to the dewy newborn flesh of her cheeks.

As she grew, she did so without the relieving sight that closeness brought the others in her tribe, and knew no difference between near and far. No gloom could best the darkness she carried behind her sealed lids and Tullo began to learn the land by touch instead of story, wandering far from the grasp of her mother as the years passed.

By her sixteenth year, Tullo's gentle, curious hands had cajoled the secrets from every aged, wrinkled rock and every fistful of earth within many miles of her birth place. She wandered further and further, hunting new scents, sensations, tastes and touch. But mile after mile, Tullo found only the same stones and the same damp earth. Until the moment when she knelt down to investigate a large rock, and fingers stretched wide and searching through the air, instead she found Uku.

Unbeknownst to Tullo's tribe, there were others living on the land, swept under the heavy blanket of darkness. Far, far away in the distance, another tribe huddled together, whispering of the death and doom that lurked beyond reach. At the same moment as Tullo had tumbled to the world for the first time, in this place a boy named Uku was born to the gloom.

Uku's father had carried a fierce, chieftains heart within him, and had been lost months before the birth. Drawn off into the unreachable, nameless places her had never returned. Without her lover by her side, Uku's mother had pushed such devotion into her swelling belly that when Uku announced his arrival with the softest of cries, he did so with a heart so full, he feared no thing, especially not the dark.

And as Tullo had been lead to wander the land in her curiosity, so too had Uku been drawn away from his tribe by his courage. His sixteen years had grown the agility and certainty of a warrior, and his toughened feet came to travel far from the tribe's reach, in search of adventure and knowing.

In the moments before the world changed, Uku had come sit heavily upon the earth. He had walked far beyond the stones and earth that smelt most familiar to him and paused to satisfy the nagging aching of his growing muscles. Sitting quiet, breathing softly, Uku had been listening keenly to the endless void before him.

Though it had never happened before, his warriors heart beat steady as the air around his cheeks had suddenly become excited, betraying the arrival of something before him, lurking in the shadow. The earth whispered around him, as something moved along the soil. Uku did not truly believe the tales of beasts and terrors roaming the unseen spaces, but he coiled his muscles none the less, and remained silent, and still until the touch of gentle, curious, invisible hand upon his knee caused him to utter a quiet 'Oh.' in surprise.

Tullo did not withdraw her hand but instead reached towards the place in the blackness that the sound had come from, and was astonished to find this shape, so much softer than a stone, had two lips as familiar as if they were upon her own face.

The first meeting was brief, and strange in it's intimacy, both Tullo and Uku accepting with ease the appearance of another wander. Both equally curious to learn the shapes and smells of the other, both equally happy to succumb to soft palmed explorations of arms, knees, earlobes and hair, each prodding enquiry met with the remarkable realisation that although much was different between them, many things were very much the same.

It was not long before Tullo and Uku learnt that when they stole silent from the grasp of their kin, they would find one another. No matter the direction their feet pointed, no matter which way the wind blew, or what speed they travelled. Tullo would walk invisible lines that lead to Uku's bright and fierce heart, and Uku would stride, bold into the dingy landscape following the sweet scent of Tullo's breath. And when the time was right, each would reach calmly forward into the inky air, to find the fingers of the other, reaching out for them also.

So it continued until the young man with the warrior's heart, and the young woman who carried the secrets of the darkness within her, were one. And it was as though their souls knew no other thing.

And so it was, that in intimate whispers between the young lover's ears, a decision was made, to tell their kin of what joy had found in the void.

Although Tullo and Uku untangled fingers, lips and limbs, and parted with ease and joy in their hearts, it was not to last. For the story of their meeting fell upon panicked and fearful ears when each of the lovers returned to their tribes. Both Tullo and Uku's mothers, with many miles of land between them, wept and wailed in anguish, believing their children to have been lured and tricked by a beast from the unknown. The story of the shape-shifting monster lurking in the dark, swept through both tribes.

Despite the protests of the lovers, both their stories were quickly and vigorously embellished as they passed from ear to ear. Soon, hushed voices trembled as they described the horrible, hypnotic touch and fearsome hunger for human flesh of this horrid creature that lurked somewhere close by.

It was not long before the urgent whispers turned to frightened chatter and great commotion erupted amongst both families. Fear turned to distress, distress to anger, anger to frenzy, and frenzy to action. Far away from each other, two tribes hatched one plan.

Determined hands gathered together, searching for rocks as large and sharp as could be carried. Jostling with unease and fortified by the bold words of a brave few, shoulders were touched to form long, restless lines. With heavy stones in hand, invisible feet began to walk away from their places of birth for the very first time. A hunt had begun.

As chaos had begun to devour her tribe, Tullo gently squeezed her mother's hand, and slipped away. She travelled swiftly towards Uku confused by the swell of urgency she felt rolling within her heart. Breathless, Uku and Tullo reached for, and found one another, simultaneously recounting the confusion and fervour they had heard spill from the lips of their kin. As they spoke the earth beneath their feet began to rumble with the footsteps of their families and soon their voices sliced through the air around the lovers. Above the din, Tullo urgently cried out for her tribe to halt, and Uku bellowed loudly so his family might recognise his voice. But it was in vain. At the sound of shouting directly in front of them both families hurled the jagged edges of their stones towards the noise. The rocks of both sides struck Tullo and Uku, and no one else. They held one another tightly as they each closed their eyes for the last time and surrendered to the darkness.

As the life left the bodies of Tullo and Uku, the light of love they each held in their hearts fell from their chests and into the earth, illuminating everything for the very first time. The blinding light revealed both tribes, and they saw each other for the first time, and realised they were the same. In that light they saw the fallen bodies of their children, and realised their mistake. Where Uku's body had fallen the first growth emerged, a tree set aflame in amber and gold, shooting quickly up above the awed gaze of both tribes. From Tullo's body a tree of silver white sprung into being chasing the golden tree into the sky. From deep within the trunk of the golden tree, the sun blazed into being and erupted from the branches, from within the silver bark the moon revealed herself. For a moment it looked as though the lovers would again be united, but the winds awoke, and whipped around the earth, taking Uku, the sun, in one direction, and Tullo, the moon far across the horizon to the other-side of earth.

With the sun and moon in the sky, new life began to shift in the barren soil, the waters of the land began to move with appearance of the moon, and the fish came into being. The tribes realised the love of their children had brought them life, and hope, and with sorrow acknowledged the terrible error that had been made in doubting all that came from the dark. The two tribes joined together, to form one family forever more. In celebration of the great love that illuminated the darkness, and in penance for their grievous actions the tribe vowed to join the lovers in any way they could, and now they walk the earth in perpetual ceremony, carrying messages of love between the Sun, and the Moon, keeping them company, until they are once again reunited.