

Anthony, Where Are You?

By Gary Caganoff ©

Once upon a time in a far away land, a young man, named Anthony, found himself waking from unconsciousness on a deserted beach. He lay for a time in the sand whilst waves washed over him, rolling into shore as they had done repeatedly for a million years.

Remembering nothing before this moment Anthony's attention was fixed upon the great ocean. He sat up, expecting the ocean to talk. His mind formed questions he wanted the ocean to answer. 'Who are you?', Anthony demanded. The wind simply blew in his face and the waves continued to crash upon the beach. Anthony looked around him. 'Who am I?', he whispered. 'What am I doing here?'. Receiving no answers Anthony soon began to wonder whether the ocean could talk at all.

Anthony stood, then walked along the soft warm sand until he came to a fresh water stream emptying into the ocean. The stream flowed full and bold, carrying the load of a million miles, boasting the span of a million years. Anthony drank. Then breathed. Then drank again, listening to the sound of the water running through his hands and around the rocks.

On the other side of the stream, half buried in the sand, lay an old capsized boat. Anthony swam across and started to dig the boat out. Excitedly he worked all day until finally the boat was free for him to roll upright. The hull seemed intact, the wood was thick and strong. The boat looked as though it had made many journeys. Inside, jammed under the seat, Anthony found an empty cloth bag. He washed the bag in the stream and hung it over the side to dry.

On the sandy edge Anthony studied the river upstream. Its course was straight. But at the farthest point the river swung out of sight. He wondered what lay beyond the bend. Climbing a sand dune Anthony could see further inland. Huge mountains capped with spires of sharp crystal rose high above a dark green carpet of forest. On the far horizon rose the biggest mountain of all. Its peak was covered in dark cloud. Cracks of sharp light flashed out of the cloud. Anthony's eyes lit up as he watched the light dance across the horizon.

Anthony listened to the thunder of the ocean as it crashed upon the sand. He watched the spray of the waves fly on the wind and felt it saturate his body. He watched a drop run down his skin. When it hit the sand it was lost. Studying the mountain, and the river that flowed out of the forest, Anthony imagined a single drop of water falling from the summit and racing down the cliff faces, gathering volume through the valley, eventually spilling into the giant ocean. This was a pretty amazing mountain to hold beginnings of such a mighty ocean and the source of such powerful light. A great urge, as large as the ocean it seemed, welled up inside of Anthony to go and meet the mountain. If the ocean wouldn't answer his most important questions then the great mountain most certainly would.

From out of the good wood of the forest Anthony fashioned a long strong stave. Sliding the boat into the stream and climbing aboard, he slowly pushed the boat up river.

It was easy to negotiate the fat and sluggish flow. While pushing the boat there was plenty of time to look around. On either side of Anthony rose the steep forested mountains. Close by, giant trees crowded over the water's edge. Sometimes strange noises would echo from out of the forest as if someone was laughing, or howling. Anthony stared at the banks not knowing whether to be delighted or afraid.

In the sky the clouds travelled more quickly than the flow of the river. In the boat, upon reflection, Anthony made ripples across the sky.

Out of sight of the ocean, Anthony found the river surpented deeper into the forest. As the trees closed in

further Anthony's curiosity kept urging him to go discover what lay beyond the next bend. Then the next. And the next.

When he was beneath a small mountain he discovered a creek flowing out of the forest. The water was clear and as cold as snow. Anthony heard a screeching above him and looked up to see a beautiful white bird. The white bird circled once, then flew over the forest towards the mountain. Tying the boat to a tree Anthony set off up the creek in pursuit of the bird. He wanted to ask the bird how far away the great mountain was.

The trees closed in around him. The sunlight dappled through the thick canopy, making the water sparkle. The forest on either side of the creek was thick and tangled. The easiest way was to walk against the flow, to walk upstream.

Ankle deep in water Anthony pushed aside some long ferny branches, stooped through some thick vines then stopped and strained his eyes to see through the mattered forest. He saw a strange blackness ahead of him. Not sure what the blackness might be he edged cautiously forward. Soon, Anthony found himself peering out from behind a fern, looking into the dark mouth of a large cave. The creek flowed out of it. His eyes grew as large as the cave mouth when he spied a very wild looking man. The wild looking man sat in the shadow of the entrance sharpening a slither of rock by the waters edge.

Anthony started to move slowly forward into the open, hoping to catch the attention of the wild man. As he came out from hiding he trod on a rotten log which crumbled beneath his weight. Anthony fell into the creek. Soaked to the skin he looked up to see the wild man disappearing deep into the darkness of the cave. Anthony picked up the slither of rock the wild man had dropped and ran the sharp edge across his finger. It easily cut the skin and drew blood. Sucking his finger he studied the cold sharp edge then clenched the stone firmly in his hand.

With no desire to follow the man into the dark, damp, miserable looking cave Anthony moved back into the forest, wandering from tall tree to tall tree. The forest canopy was far above him and the blue sky lay just beyond. Anthony was awe struck by the magnificent trees. Soon he lay down and rested beneath a huge green tree whose roots wrapped around him, providing protection. Anthony drifted to the edge of sleep.

When you go to the forest and hear the screech of the white bird
Look around for you shall meet her

When you walk in the forest
When you climb-up-over and duck-on-under the green growth that bars your way
Walk softly through the maze of trees
Look up for you shall touch the light that forms the gentle jade
Which rests upon your face
Remember its warmth

When you stand within the forest breath deeply
Suck in the aromas of the Leatherwood and Sassafras
The dank earthiness of rotting logs
Breath deeper if it pleases you
For you have met the wind

If you desire to know more about the wind
Move up to the mountains
That is where I am

However
If you stay

To stand within the forest
Dig your toes in deep
Soon lie down amongst the leaves and feel the earth beneath
Grasp it with your hands
Feel it against your shoulders, spine and buttocks
Concentrate on each individual leaf that touches your skin
Feel the dampness of the earth
The cool sensations that delight

Roll over
Press your hands, chest and pelvis to the floor
Dig your fingers beneath the humus
Press your ear to it
Listen
Listen beyond your own heart beat
Listen for you will hear me

When you cup the sweet water to your lips
Drink thoughtfully
Not thirstily
For you will miss the singing
All at once the creek sings
Each note perfect
Each octave struck
Like the eternal
Filling of a liqueur glass
Though a hundred times more sensual
Drink thoughtfully
Listen hard
For you can hear me

When you can hear
Then you shall see
If you are so close and still can't see
Then the jaded light will strike you
Slap you across the face to wake you
Here is where I linger most
This is where you'll find me

A warm wind whipped through Anthony's soul as the face of two women appeared before him - a woman with two faces, speaking two languages. A flash. A glimpse. No time to grasp her beauty.

Anthony sat up gasping the momentary air of ecstasy. Now fully awake he savoured the vision for some time. Then closed his eyes again. The forest disappeared but he could still hear its sounds. He covered his ears with his hands. He heard only the rhythm of his pounding heart. After a few beats Anthony quickly opened his eyes. The light of day dazzled him. Removing his hands from over his ears the sounds of the world came back; clearer and sharper. Looking up Anthony discovered the white bird circling the sky above him. It then flew away. Not feeling so lonely, Anthony set off in the direction it had flown and soon heard the river in the distance, which then guided him to its banks.

In the boat Anthony continued upstream finding tight bends in the river. With the tight bends came massive log jams. Anthony dragged the boat over or through the jams. His progress slowed, provoking impatience to

see what was around the next bend, to see if the great mountain was there.

Time passed and still Anthony pulled and pushed his boat up and over, under and around the huge logs that barred his way. He wondered when it would end and the way become clear again. He became exhausted. Many times he fell into the cold river, bashed and scraped his body on rocks and logs and strained his muscles to push further upstream. He imagined he was a trickle of water. How easy it would then be to slip through the matted debris of wood and return to the ocean.

Another huge log jam barred Anthony's way. Looking for a way around it he was suddenly confronted by a face peering at him out of the thick fernery. The eyes were deep and wide and the hair was wild. The face then disappeared. Anthony climbed quickly into the forest and yelled, 'Who are you? what do you want?'. The wild man had gone. His foot prints lead Anthony into the forest. At the edge of a sink hole Anthony stopped. The wild man clearly had descended into the blackness of the cave. Anthony thought of crawling after him. Then he heard a deeply clear and steady voice reverberate out of the darkness, 'The way is easier underground. I will be your guide.' Anthony moved forward to enter, then hesitated as the cut on his finger throbbed. He turned and ran back to the boat. He slung the cloth bag, with the stone inside, over his shoulder and ran back into the forest. He came to where he thought the cave to be but found only a pile of rocks. He desperately searched the forest floor for the sink hole but found no trace. He waited a while, then moved on.

Disappointed, Anthony continued to push the boat up stream, hoping the jam would soon clear. It did but it gave way to many fast and furious rapids. Anthony struggled against the flow with new found vigour. Up to his waist in water he strained against the rope tied to the bow of the boat. One leg pushed into the stream. Holding strong, the other leg would then move forward. In slow motion Anthony moved his body upstream. The boat obediently followed, jostled this way and that by the erratic flow. Sometimes, Anthony was forced to hold still. The more voluminous gushes threatened to swamp the boat and sweep him away. He had to spend every effort to hold his ground. Anthony persisted, soon gaining great strength from his stubborn determination. Slowly, so slowly, Anthony inched his way towards the great mountain.

High forested hills soon rose around him. The water's course straightened and the rapids gave way to a clear flowing river that babbled and danced its way under him. Once again plying the boat upstream Anthony soon came upon an awesome sight. There, rising high above him, was the mouth of a deep and dark canyon. The limestone walls rose so high he couldn't see the mountains above. The water had spilled through this crack for a million years, cutting deeper and deeper into the ageing land. A million boulders lay strewn around the canyon mouth.

It was plain to see that the boat could go no further forward. Anthony would have to abandon it. Grabbing the cloth bag and stepping onto a boulder Anthony let the boat go. It turned in an eddy then was quickly swept away.

Turning towards the canyon Anthony took a deep breath and waded into the cold black pool, then swam into its mouth. A giant boulder was jammed between the walls above him, creating a tunnel where light was scarce. In the tunnel Anthony climbed up a small waterfall and headed out the other side. He scanned the walls of the canyon. There was no way to climb them. The only way was forward.

Swimming pool after deep pool Anthony became more and more cold. His warm breath turned to vapour in the cold air. His desperate gasps were muffled by the grey rock walls. The canyon had become so narrow he could touch both walls with outstretched arms.

Progressing up stream, numerous tributaries joined the main flow. Mighty canyons gouged their way into the main stream. Anthony gave in to uncertainty as the waters evenly mixed. Not knowing which canyon to follow he was soon lost within a labyrinth of the deepest, darkest canyons and coldest coldest creeks.

After another painful swim Anthony walked, shivering uncontrollably, across a pebbled beach to another

junction. A beam of sunlight broke inside the canyon and rested on the pebbles. Anthony entered into the beam and was instantly warmed. He sat there for a while watching the steam rise and the beam move across him. He moved with it. He soaked it up like a lizard, knowing it would soon be gone. A puddle of water attracted Anthony's attention. From where he sat he could clearly see reflections on the surface. He leant forward to see the reflection of the blue sky. Staring at the sky on the water he wished he could fly. He wished he could lift himself above the labyrinth of canyons and see which direction the great mountain lay. A great loneliness welled up inside of him. All of a sudden a breeze rippled across the surface of the puddle. The reflection of the blue sky distorted. The sun beam disappeared. He looked up past the canyon walls and heard a great wind howl across the tops. It seemed to be calling his name as if it was searching for him every where but was unable to find him. Loneliness squirmed even deeper into his soul.

The canyons were silent except for the constant slog of water. Anthony washed his face. A few metres from him, growing out of the pebble beach was a twisted old tree whose knarled roots were wrapped tightly around the smooth skin of a secure black boulder. The few leaves it carried were withered and spent and its stunted trunk was riddled with leprosy. The tree was doubled over, falling downstream, losing the fight against youthful floods.

Created by time, fire and water an old man's face was etched in the wood. An eye was open with fear as if the heavy blow of a sword was coming down upon it. The quivering mouth was shouting. A leafless branch, like a long thin finger, pointed towards the incoming canyon.

Wrapped in his own feelings Anthony studied the old tree with indifference, dismissed its wretched state and waded into the promised warmth of a new canyon. He chose one over the other. No sooner had he entered did the rock walls seem to grow tighter and darker. Anthony waded into the icy water, then swam further and further from the safety of land. The canyon wound on. The slimy walls were as smooth as glass. Anthony struggled to keep afloat. The cold crushed his body, forcing him to move in slow motion. His blue body stopped but his mind kept kicking...

A brilliant light seeped out from under the door. Through the key hole Anthony spied an old wooden staircase. Six men appeared at the top. They were dressed in dark suits and wore top hats. Slowly, solemnly they walked

the
coffin
to
the
ground.

Pulling away from the door Anthony heard voices reverberating off the canyon walls. He swung around and around, looking for a place to hide, hoping that the walls may give way. In panic, he jammed himself under a large boulder. As the voices come closer he squirmed his way even further beneath rock and earth. A pall bearer's face peered into the darkness. Anthony pushed himself deeper and deeper into the fissure. The pall bearer disappeared but Anthony kept pushing himself backwards. Soon he backed right back out into the open. Standing up and looking around, Anthony found himself back at the canyon junction. Rain fell hard. In the flooding canyon - in the rising river - the old man tree stood there before him. That fearful eye. That warning voice. That quivering finger. That 'old man' posture.

Climbing to a high rock shelf Anthony witnessed the old man drown. The water gushed. Its volume grew. The tranquil flow becomes a trap for those whose feet are planted deeply. Faceless people singing lonely tunes tumbled down from dead end canyons, joining mass harmonics from high souled spirits who journey down to river's end. The leper emerges, bent over backwards. How much pain can he endure before he too is swept away?

Anthony moved into the opposite canyon. The way forward seemed just as dark but his new wisdom guided him on.

The water flowed beneath the river bed. The canyon floor was dry and carpeted with sand and ferns. Beams of sunlight made the journey even more pleasant. He stopped often, warming himself and taking the time to look around. Soon Anthony came across a high waterfall that plunged into a deep black pool. Spying a series of ledges he swam to the base of the falls and attempted to climb the slippery rock. Half way up, beneath the spray of cold water the ledges petered out. Anthony stood upon the last ledge and peered up the falls into the sun.

Above the noise of the falls Anthony heard a deep laugh that echoed up from down the stream. Edging his way along the ledge to hide beneath the thin veil of water he discovered a rope leading up the face. Anthony pulled on it to see if it was secure then put his full weight onto it. It held. Hand over hand Anthony proceeded to pull himself up the rope against the pounding water on his shoulders. At length, Anthony leant back to see how far there was to go. His head poked out from behind the falls. Standing at the top was the wild man with three of the pall bearers. They beckoned for Anthony to join them, encouraging him to climb higher. Anthony hung precariously to the rope. Beneath him he heard the sounds of the other pall bearers waiting at the edge of the pool.

Frantically, Anthony climbed higher. Just before the top he hesitated. He had little strength left in him to hold on. The wild man mercilessly hacked away at the rope with a sharpened stone...

Standing naked
The wild coastal shore stretched before him
The sand beneath
That he sinks his feet deep into
Feels like the first pit of sand he ever played in

Anthony watched in disbelief as each strand of the rope was cut...

Wild Waves curl down
Crashing upon the beach
Spraying a fine salt mist
That dances through his hair

With a snap Anthony found himself plummeting downwards...

The rivers are the poets who share life and make it run

The mountains are the keepers

And the places in between are where the creatures dwell

The ocean is the limit

It is also

The

Beginning

Anthony plunged into the depths of the pool until he could be forced down no further. He looked up into the dull light of day. He looked around for somewhere to go. Down, he decided to swim. Down was the only way out. Down into the darkness of depth, far beneath the churning currents of water.

Anthony bumped into a rock wall. With one hand on the wall to guide him Anthony propelled himself still deeper. Suddenly his hand ran into space. In the blackness he felt the mouth of a small hole in the rock. He swam inside and clawed his way along the tunnel wall. It wound onwards then upwards. His breath was becoming exhausted but he kicked and beat his way through the darkness. With a burst, Anthony broke the surface. Groping for an edge he hauled himself over rock and lay gasping for breath.

The surface of the water stilled. The cave was silent save the beating of Anthony's heart. The men had not followed, he was sure. Out of the corner of one eye Anthony spied a passage. On all fours Anthony cautiously moved towards it. He felt a faint warm breeze on his face. He entered and continued to crawl down the passage

After a while Anthony rolled headlong into a cavern. Water dripped from the ceiling creating millions of tiny columns of crystal. Anthony stood up and wandered around the cavern. In the middle of the cavern he found a hole in the floor. He peered over the edge but couldn't see the bottom. With a draft of stale air only darkness came up from the depths.

A trickle of water traversed the cavern. The water seeped through one wall and drained out through a hole in the another. Anthony drank deeply from a puddle then rested. The cavern was warm. For the first time since he had left the boat he felt safe.

Amongst the sparkling light grew many dark shards of rock. In one shadowed corner Anthony found another passage. He crawled into it. The passage turned downwards. The warmth of the cavern got warmer. Anthony felt his way down a narrow winding passage. The rock wall he felt his way along spiralled deeper and deeper towards the centre of the earth.

The deeper Anthony went the less wet was the rock. He kicked up dirt which made him choke often. At length, he tumbled his way into a corridor. Sprawled in the dirt, Anthony strained his eyes, noticing slithers of faint light bouncing across the white dusty floor. As he focused his eyes he saw similar corridors criss crossing each other at different levels. He was in a giant cave with rock carved like honey comb. Down each corridor Anthony saw light escaping from underneath numerous doorways that opened into each corridor. Countless corridors with even more countless rooms.

After taking it all in Anthony crawled up to the first door he came to and opened it slowly. Then moved inside. It seemed empty. The dirt on the floor was thick. Anthony choked on the dust that he had disturbed. Not knowing where he was or what he was doing Anthony lay on his back, tired and troubled. Not knowing which way to go. He wanted to give up. He could lay here till he died for all he cared. Then in the corner of the room he spied a small bowl. He crawled over to it. The bowl was filled with water. In the contrasting light the water played tricks on Anthony's eyes. Some light danced here, then there. He looked closely. The light began to form images on the surface of the water.

The first image he saw was of some children hurling rocks and stones at each other. One little boy, much too young to play such rough games was hiding behind a mound of dirt. A rock landed plum on his unprotected head.

The water went dark for a while, then colours reflected off the water, as if Anthony was looking through a kaleidoscope. The light seemed to reflect movement through a tunnel then revealed a clearer image.

A man in a blue uniform lay behind a mound of dirt. He was scared as he had no more ammunition to protect himself. Canons and gun fire raged on around him. The man slowly peeked over the mound to see where the enemy was at. Before he knew it his chest was pierced by an arrow.

The water went black. Then dissolved to another image.

A man stood alone at the back of a small stone church. He wept for his wife and child who lay in a coffin on the alter, who had died of the plague. The priest walked in and lay a comforting hand upon his shoulder.

The final reflection was of a small boat on the ocean. The boat was being rowed by a dozen slaves. Anthony was one of them. He felt as if he had been rowing the ocean bound in chains all his life. Anthony felt the pain of the loss of losing loved ones. He felt the pain of the arrow through his chest and the pain of the rock hitting his head. Anthony slumped on the floor, exhausted.

At last Anthony left the room and entered another. He found the bowl of water directly and stared at its reflection. Images came up that overjoyed him. Scenes of playing on the beach with his mother, hiding in the forest with his brothers, having adventures with his friends. Like he experienced in the first room, the water reflected scenes that seemed to all fit together, sharing a common theme to them all. The theme emphasising the lesson learnt.

Anthony visited as many rooms as he could, watching the reflection of each bowl of water. Each lesson had a profound spiritual, mental and emotional impact upon him. As he was viewing the past he began to realise the significance of it all. Really, he had been here before but had never seen such details.

Anthony entered one room with caution. It was darker than the others. This room seemed so empty, void of all fact. Yet something pushed him. He moved. In a dark lonely corner he focused his gaze... The white bird. The white bird lay dying in the dirt of the cave.

Gently holding the bird to his breast he carried it out to the corridor. Wrapping the bird in his cloth bag he made his way back up through the tunnel and into the cavern. Laying the bird down on the crystal floor Anthony cleaned the hard clay from its damaged white feathers. The bird soon passed away.

Pain overflowed inside of Anthony. A pain that reached to the ocean and back. The pain came from deep, deep inside a part of his heart. This pain cut his soul like a knife. Anthony picked up the white corpse and dropped it into the bottomless pit. He waited a while. No sound was heard. Not even the dripping of his tears into the dark and dried-up well. Soon he felt a subtle fresh wind blow up from the depths of the abyss. He could soon hear water beginning to flow deep down inside.

A woman in white flowing robes presented herself to him. Silently he moved towards her. He asked,

‘how much?’

‘twenty two’

she replied

He gave her twelve

Through a high passage-way the wild man leapt and landed on the floor in front of him. Anthony pummelled the wild man into the dirt. The wild man vanished.

He asked the woman again,

‘How much?’

‘twenty two’

she replied

He gave her twelve

Again through the high passage-way the wild man leapt out onto the floor. The woman stepped in between them. She turned and whispered into the wild man’s ear,

‘He’s still not ready to meet you.’

The wild man laughed and walked out the door.

Anthony stared at the woman. He had never seen such a creature. Her skin was as soft and as white as that beautiful bird. She slowly moved towards him, holding his curious gaze. She reached out and took both his hands. Giving a gentle kiss to his lips she then proceeded to lift off his mask. Anthony stood, mesmerised by the woman’s magic. He stared at her standing there with his old face in her hands. He moved quickly to return the kiss but she pulled away. ‘Not yet. Not yet.’

The white woman moved off into the damp darkness.

Anthony crawled back down into the labyrinth of rooms. He laboured in opening as many doors as he could. He propped them open with big heavy rocks so they would never close ever again. All the light began to stream out of the rooms and into the corridors. He followed one corridor forward as he had not done before, pushing more doors and jamming them open.

At length the corridor came to an end, or so it seemed. Anthony lay back against the wall to rest. After contemplation he realised that the corridor shouldn’t end. He looked at the dead end wall with scepticism. Examined its solidity. Anthony scraped away the top layer of dirt at the base of the wall. He found an edge and dug on under, a small hole that broke through to another side. He peered on in but could see nothing but darkness. Scraping away more dirt he freed the bottom of the door. He found the seams that ran up the wall and scraped them down. Tying the cloth bag onto a flat piece of rock Anthony slipped the rock under the door. He pulled the bag so the rock then jammed between the door and the floor. He twisted the bag to give it more strength then pulled with all his might. The door shifted and shifted again.

Anthony wedged the door open with rocks and pebbles and dirt. A pungent breath kissed his right hand cheek. A soft draft of stale air blew through his hair. The wind picked up, coming from deep within this room. Clouds of cobwebs blew out the door. The wind grew in strength. Anthony sat there, fixed to the floor, protecting his eyes from the flying dirt, screaming with rage above the sound of the wind. The wind swept through the labyrinth not ceasing ‘til it had swept through the entire labyrinth.

Anthony moved cautiously into the room. The air was fresh. In the new calm, Anthony tried peering into the darkness. He could make out nothing. Soon, a shard of light leapt out from under a crack, there, above and in front of him, six men in dark suits and wearing top hats walked through the door at the top of the stair, carrying a coffin.

The men descended the staircase and set the coffin upon a pedestal, then dissolved into the darkness beyond. With tears streaming down his face Anthony walked cautiously over to the coffin and peered in. A mask covered the face of the dead. The body was naked, cold and stiff. The mask was as ugly as death itself. None of the pain he had experienced on his journey came close to the fear he now felt. Bracing himself he slowly lifted off the mask. Anthony stared at himself. Here he was, very much alive yet witnessing his own lifelessness.

The initial shock slowly drifted away. Then, for the first time, Anthony found compassion for himself. It was easy to imagine that this man once smiled, laughed, winced and frowned at the world. But the face seemed to belong to a different person who lived a long time ago. What a wretched, selfish face it was. Anthony scooped up the corpse in his arms and walked further into the room.

In the distance Anthony could hear running water. He moved towards it. Eventually reaching the water's edge he found the old row boat that had born him up the river. He placed the corpse in the boat and untied the mooring. The boat drifted downstream, heading back towards the ocean. In that instance a brilliant light filled the room. The light was so bright that it seemed to shimmer off the walls, floor and roof. It seemed as if the room was of infinite size, made of pure light. Dazzled, Anthony wondered if this was the same light that danced around the mountain. He wondered too if he was in fact beneath the mountain itself. Anthony journeyed deeper into the space trying to locate the source of light.

Suddenly, there in front of Anthony, stood the wild man wearing a soft smile on his face. Anthony wasn't afraid. Instead he felt relieved to see something familiar in such a dimensionless place. He new now why they were there. Anthony moved closer to the wild man and studied his wild features.

'Why was the door jammed shut?'

asked Anthony

'Who jammed it?'

'I'm feeling something I have never known before.

I feel...

...limitless.'

The wild man smiled some more, as if the answers lay hidden in his dimples.

'You still have a long way to travel my friend'

You can touch the light but you can't yet hold it

Then the wild man turned and walked silently off into the distance, towards the source of great light

Anthony walked forward in the hope of following but found it was impossible. Something held him back. He built a rock cairn to mark his progress then retreated back to the door he had opened. A tunnel directed Anthony back to the surface. He emerged back into the forest stumbling on the slippery rocks in the river bed. The canyon gave way to vast tracts of undulating forest. Through the green canopy Anthony spied the

great mountain rising high above everything else. Its crystal peak sparkled in the sunshine.

By the side of the stream Anthony knelt over to wash himself. His face reflected sharply off the water's surface. He studied his face, caked in dirt and covered with long wild hair. As wild as the wild man's. He laughed a wild kind of laugh. Washed his face and drank deeply to quench his thirst. Anthony was so content that he even lay and basked in the sun for a while. He was in no hurry. The mountain wasn't going anywhere. The water babbled and danced around him on its way from the mountain to the sea.

Whilst resting next to the stream Anthony reflected. He thought about the wild man. How all the wild man wanted to do was help him, and how Anthony hadn't listened. He thought about all those doors and the memories he kept locked inside. He also thought about the courage he had to open those doors, the strength he had that led him to such great depths. He thought too about the labyrinth of caves and canyons, and the pain he had endured which ultimately led to the joy he now felt. He reflected on the time where he returned to the boat for the stone. How things might have been different if he had left it and gone immediately with the wild man. What did he learn from that? He asked himself.

Anthony leaned over the edge of the stream and once more drank deeply. He then set off up the stream towards the great mountain. The way was not easy, however Anthony took it in his stride. He felt more confident, more agile, more free to move through the tangled trees. Anthony stopped often to listen to the water singing through the rocks, and the birds play their games in the trees. He knew the trees were watching him. Every now and again he would climb one to let it show him the view from above. The mountain got closer every time he saw it. Anthony wondered about the mist in the mountains and the light that danced across the horizon on special occasions. He wondered about the ocean and everything from here to there.

One day Anthony walked over a rise and found the mountain sitting there, as if it was waiting for him. A lake, nestled at the base of the sheer mountain wall, lay between Anthony and the mountain. The lake was the source of the river. The mountain was the source of the lake. Anthony plunged into the lake and swam across to the mountain wall. He chose his own route to climb up the face. Anthony climbed confidently high above the lake. The angle became more steep the higher he climbed. Soon he climbed into the cloud and kept climbing through. He held onto cracks with his finger nails, placed his feet on dimples in the rock and rested on thin ledges. He jammed his hands and feet into fissures, holding himself tight as he climbed the great wall. The mountain was alive with light that danced across the clouds. Anthony straddled aretes and smeared his feet on smooth walls, he climbed onto the ice and cut steps to the top. At the summit, Anthony stood watching the light sparkle and crackle. The cloud was electric. His hair stood on end. The show was for him. One great crack of light landed right next to him. And again it did the same. Anthony was ready the next time it struck. As the brilliant light hit the ground in front of him Anthony reached out and touched it. The next time, he wrapped his fingers around it. At last, Anthony stood there holding the brilliant light in his hands.

Anthony then began to melt into the rock and ice. He melted into the depths of the mountain carrying with him the light he had captured. Finally, Anthony found himself back in the great room, back in the dimensionless space filled with brilliant white light, back at the rock cairn he had built where he last met the wild man. From there, Anthony moved forward. He walked confidently towards the source of light. He didn't know how much time had passed but eventually he arrived at the heart of the room - in fact, the heart of the entire river system. At the centre of all, he offered the light he held in his hands. He offered it to the sky. He offered it to the mountain. He offered it to the river and the forest. He offered it to the ocean. Opening his hands, the light flashed and cracked and was instantly absorbed by the all mighty source.

With the dawn came a slight breeze that proceeded to clear the cloud from the summit of the mountain. As the sun climbed over the far horizon Anthony awoke from a deep slumber. He was wedged tightly between

two rocks in an effort to keep warm. Stepping into the daylight the sun lit up the landscape that surrounded him. He was agape at the beauty that lay there before him. With his eyes he followed the flow of the river from the lake beneath the summit all the way through the forest to the ocean, which was a distant strip of blue that blended into the pink horizon. Anthony slowly turned around on top of the summit and beheld horizons he had never seen. From the summit to the four corners of the world lay even more massive mountains.

At the same time, Anthony found himself waking from unconsciousness on a deserted beach. He lay for a time in the sand whilst waves washed over him, rolling into shore as they had done repeatedly for a million years. As he opened his eyes a bolt of lightning flashed out across the water...

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