

The Mountain

Mother of the Mountain

I awoke on the slope of a mountain. I couldn't remember how I had come to be here.
I probably didn't want to know.

Something inside me drove my legs forward. It wasn't my own will. My will had abandoned me here.
I dove forward with more vigor than I knew I could summon. Feet crunching leaves and bounding off of rocks.

I kept moving forward, up what were gentile slopes, which began to get steeper. As the mountain crawled upward from the horizon, I became aware of new fire in my gut. One that wasn't the product of drinking, drugs, or any of my other vices. I had to get to the top.

I wasn't sure what drove me, but it inspired a passion the likes of which I haven't felt since I was younger.
I began to climb upwards when my path found cliffs, down when it found gullies, and when it found flat land, I rested.

The day was quickly growing into night, when I found myself at an impasse.
I began to climb upwards on the steepest cliff face I had found yet.
I climbed upwards and despite all my drive could not pull myself to the top.
I would grasp for rocks that would become loose and fall at my side. Branches that were brittle and would snap when I grasped at them.
I fell numerous times, tumbling down to the autumn leaves that littered the ground below. Each time, feeling more defeated than the last.

I was in a clearing. The same clearing that I had fallen back into since I started to climb that wrenched cliff.

I was also tired, my clothes had started to tatter from the falls I had taken, and I was hungry.

I stayed my hunger away, and leaned back on a tree. Before me, the mountain grew in size. Seemingly impossible to climb. However my drive was not hindered, but seemed to increase. Every fall implied defeat but after a moment of reflection, I realized that it was not defeat, but rather an obstacle.

The cliff wall stretched in both directions, and I quickly realized that there was no going around. Even if there was, the wall challenged me, and I would damned to not meet its challenge.

I knew it was time to draw my eyes closed. I must sleep.

In my sleep I was visited.

She was beautiful. A woman so gorgeous, it pained the eyes to behold her.
Her skin radiated with a light that seemed so alien, but familiar.
I saw her and she turned to me. She stared at me.
Finally, she spoke.

"You have come to the mountain to surmount your sins."
"In life before, you were guilty."
"The Mountain will teach you."
"Mold you"
"It will absolve your guilt and all before and after will become clear to you"

A white light washed over me, and I awoke.

I was at the top of the cliff I could not climb.
I felt stronger, and ready to continue.
In my head a prayer seemed to call out. Over the trees on the Mountain.

Over the air itself:

"Mother of the Mountain, lead our paths astray,
And take my soul into the blinding grey.
Knowledge of beginnings, carried unto ends,
Your soul entwined by the ropes and vines.
You found me in the silence, your breath brought life to me,
I was cold and lost and now I'm here again."

Whatever it meant, I knew I must continue.

Neutron Star

As the day pressed on I found myself lost. The winding groves and glades of the mountain tricked my mind in the most devious ways.
Perhaps the silence would be forgiving, perhaps the wind and the trickle of streams would be enough to sate the world of its penchant thirst for irreconcilable violence.

Wherever in the world this mountain was that is.

I wasn't sure where exactly I had awoken. The invasive machinery of man was nowhere to be found, let alone another human.

Living without the violence of man would be nice. Perhaps the world here was one of peace.

Perhaps not. I crouched low and froze as I heard the leaves rustling and shaking not more than 10 meters to the north.

I looked on as I saw a beast emerge from a thicket of small trees. It was snapping and bending the trees in its wake.

The creature shambled forward. It was bipedal, and stood about 9 feet tall. It looked simple, not harmless but easily outwitted. The creature's arms were built like tree trunks and its legs were massive. On its shoulder was slung a large bear. It looked rotten, as if he had been dragging it around in the sun for days.

I began to creep slowly, attempting to move away from the creature and take a different path.

I lost footing on the small ledge I was watching from. I fell and rolled down the incline in front of me, right to the foot of the beast.

It looked almost like he smirked before he picked me up and swung me over his shoulders.

I swung back and over limply, like a fish, and hit my head firmly on the creature's spine.

I blacked out from the force, darkness instantly surrounded me.

In my unconscious state, there was only darkness, a thick inky black that consumed all matter.

In the darkness shone a point of light. A small blue orb began to grow larger in my vision. It drew closer and closer and was nearly all I could see before I realized it was a star.

The star kept coming closer and closer, until the light from it was too much.

I awoke in the night. The light from the star had followed me to the waking world.

The source was of interest to me. It seemed a star in the sky was burning with an intense light.

The star from my vision now hung in the sky like rotten fruit from a dead tree.

Its blue light was almost sickeningly calming. The world seemed to stop when it was doused in the blue light from the star.

"We do not know what it is. Only that when it is in the sky the wolves become calm once again. The animals no longer snarl and snap at the world, they no longer claw at the earth."

I sat in silence and looked at the beast across from me. He was covered in patchy, stringy hair.

Beneath a mighty beard, and a leathery, grizzled face, eyes of gold cruelly pierced my being.

"I sit every night and sing to my wolves when the star is out."

He gestured towards a pack of wolves he had tied up to a nearby tree.

Without prompt the creature began to yowl.

"The night sky, burns with fire from the firmament."

And the power of god dwindles, under the hand, of the neutron star."
"The fire and fervor that sings the earth
Hail and comets rain down in rebirth
It is the star that will burn up the skies
From The Mountains deceit to the forests lies"

After the creature stopped its yowling, I regained a sense of my situation.
To my surprise, I wasn't tied up.
Even more surprising, I was unharmed.
I looked to the beast and asked, "What do you want?"
"Nothing. You looked tired. And hungry."
"Eat" he gestured to a wooden plate of crudely butchered and cooked meat.
I recognized it as the rotting bear he had slung across his shoulder.
Upon closer inspection, the meat seemed to be crawling with maggots, and flies swarmed around the uncooked bits.
I was very hungry.
However I knew if I ate it I would most likely meet my end.
"I am sorry beast, but I cannot accept your bounty. I am on a journey." I murmured.
"However I could rest more, if you would let me."
The beast sat in a stunned silence. He glared over the dismembered bear at me.
"If you will not share the feast then you are not welcome." He snarled.
I got up quickly. He looked at me and then glanced at his wolves.
"If you will not break bread, then they will have you!"
He yanked the rope that held the wolves at the tree. I turned heel and began to run through the trees.

Thrown to the Wolves

The star in the sky grew darker and darker as the barking behind me grew louder.
The pack of wolves was gaining on me.
I quickly turned a jagged step into a dense layer of trees. The fading light barely allowing me to hold on to what sight I still had in the night.
Ducking under branches and dodging thorny plants that ripped and grasped at my ragged clothes.

The trees were growing thicker, but I simply couldn't maneuver in the manner that the wolves could.
The trees around me began to twist together into a knot of woven branches.
I climbed over them quickly but found myself snared. The wolves were drawing closer however the trees had stopped their rapid progress.

I was tangled in the branches of two trees that were growing together, vines and leaves seemed to not only hold me, but tighten around me.

At a second glance in the dying light, the trees themselves seemed to move. I quickly realized that I was not hallucinating and that the ground itself was now shifting. I rose with the branches as the two trees at either side of me appeared to stand up on two knotted trunks like legs.

The trees began to shiver and shake as the wolves had now caught up to me.

With the sound of twisting wood and creaking earth came a loud clap like thunder.

What I could see with my fading vision was a sight to behold.

Two massive roots had wrested themselves from the ground and wrapped around the wolves, crushing them instantly.

I was relieved, but also cautious as I was currently tangled in what would appear to be the cause of the sudden and violent reaction.

As quickly as it had begun it was over and with what seemed like a gentle breeze I heard whispers.

"This one is not like the rest, his purpose is pure, and his intention is not harm"

With that they carried me off without another word.

A Trip with the Elmsmen

I was brought to a clearing where about 12 of the same trees that now held me all stood in silence.

As I drew closer I could hear the whispers over the gusting wind.

"Prepare it"

"We mustn't upset the sacred order, there can be no outsiders"

"We will stay with tradition, on this night we commence the ritual"

In the pitch dark, a spark shot from one of the tree's silhouettes. A great fire exploded with heat and light in the center of the clearing.

"Young one" one of the trees holding me addressed me.

"We have found you pure in intention. We have spared you from the wretched wolves and vandals of the forest. We wish to perform a sacred ritual here tonight and you shall be witness"

I wanted to respond but didn't quite know how.

"Simply think"

I thought for a moment. The first thing that struck me, was the fact that I could understand these creatures. The one who sent the wolves after me, the trees, it didn't make sense. There was no way they were speaking English.

The tree that held me certainly heard the thought, but had nothing to say about it.

I responded "I will gladly participate, and thank you for saving me"

"You are welcome, Meat"

My eyes turned towards the fire.

"One would think that trees would shy away from the fire"

"We are the Elmsmen. Long ago were twisted into this form by the star."

The other tree now spoke up with the same voice as the others.

"Tonight on the night of the star, we burn our elders to make room for the saplings. We partake of their bodies as the smoke rises to the star and sates its thirst."

"We do it on the nights when the star appears, so that it may spare our saplings of the wicked twisting that give us our conscience."

The other trees in the circle began to rip trees in the forest out by the roots and throw them on the pyre. The pyre began to smoke and crackle with bright green flames. The smoke that rose from the fire appeared to be purple.

The tree folk then began to sway in the breeze that picked up. Leaves shaking until a rhythm picked up. The trees that were holding me set me down and I walked forward into the circle of trees. The flames rose higher as they threw more trees on.

One of the larger trees twisted a branch down towards me. In his hands he held an antler that seemed to be hollow and smoking from the top. In the bottom an ember burned with a dull light.

The tree then took one twisted root and pushed my face into the opening of the antler.

"Breathe"

I took a long deep breath. The smoke was sweet and didn't burn my throat

When I took my head from the antler, the world was no longer night. Lights exploded around me and the flames danced around the purple smoke in a graceful dance.

The trees now had faces, twisted in the knots of the bark. The star above no long hung like rancid fruit, but rather a shining globe that pulsed with peace.

I began to dance with the Elmsmen, drinking the sweet nectar they brought to my lips in intricately carved horns and antlers.

I remember not much more after that, only dreams.

Manifest Destiny

That night I dreamed.

I dreamed of home.

I saw my parents through the face of a clock. The hands wildly spinning.

They were growing older as the hands spun, aging instantly.

I saw my mother more wrinkled than when I had left her, her head in her hands, crying.

My father grew older and withered. A man who was as strong as the mountain I was now climbing seemingly turned to ashes in front of my eyes.

I wanted to cry, I wanted to scream, and I wanted it to end.

The flashes of my parents decaying was supplanted by images of my friends, growing older, getting married and having children.

They grew old just as my parents and withered just as they did.

Then I saw myself.

The vision of me stood with my arms to my sides.

In my chest I saw black lines, start to form. The lines grew and flooded my veins with darkness.

Eventually my skin was marked with lines of darkness, like ink marks paper.

Light began to shine from my eyes and mouth and I let out a bellowing scream.

Then, nothing.

The Doorway – Sealed

I awoke. I was in the clearing that the trees had been using for the ritual.

The ring of ashes remained, however it appeared the Elmsmen had gone back to the forest.

I picked myself up and began to walk forward through the branches, out of the woods and up the mountain.

I walked over a hill, and before me rose the top half of the mountain. The snowy peak was in view, and I quickly realized how far I had gone.

I knew I had much more to go though.

I walked not much further when I came to the foot of another larger cliff.

In the cliff there was a carved section that was almost 15 meters tall and just as wide.

It looked almost like a door, and upon examining the edges, I saw that light was coming through.

I had found a massive stone door.

The door was obviously unmovable, but I felt the need to open it. In the stone door, there was a shape inlaid. A star of some sort. It had a recess at each point and in the center, where all the lines connected.

Each recess was almost perfectly round.

I ignored the door for the time being, and instead began to assemble a place to sleep.

I gathered broken branches and leaves, careful to not disturb any tree I thought I recognized.

I then gathered a few stones and large sticks. I may need a weapon.

I spent the rest of the day fashioning a shelter and making a makeshift set of clubs from a few sticks and vines.

By the time I finished, night was swiftly approaching.

The shelter I had built was rudimentary, but provided cover and somewhat of a door thanks to some large leaves I had found.

I crawled inside, exhausted and slept at the door.

I dreamed again, this time of the symbol on the door, the star.

In my dream a voice emanated from the start, whose points shone with brilliant light, each a different color.

The center stone was red and pulsed with the words.

"Sealed in stone, the doorway leads you home. Walk the path"

The word stopped and the lights started to fade.

I asked quietly, "How?"

The voice seemed to growl at the question, and replied quietly and menacingly "Find the Troll, Take the Stones"

The lights faded and I awoke. Morning came quickly, and so did my next step on the path.

Find the Troll, take the Stones.

Trollgazer

I emerged from the shelter. The morning was foggy.

I stepped with confidence. My body pulled across an invisible ley line.

I grabbed my club and began to walk to the east along the stone cliff that the door was carved in.

I walked until I came to a rocky outcrop that had a wooden pole stuck in the middle.

On the pole hung a small leather bag.

I walked up to it and only when I held it did I realize that it was my bag, from the world before.

I carried it everywhere, it often held things that were important to me on my travels. Namely a journal and some pens and pencils.

There was nothing of that sort in it anymore. Instead it held a single piece of paper. On it, there was an arrow that pointed to the south. I grabbed the bag and continued.

The southern path brought me to more trees and hills. In the side of the farthest hill, there was a cave. I immediately walked toward it.

I didn't know what to expect of the Troll, I had never met one. The voice in my dream had told me to find it, not necessarily kill it.

I came to the opening of the cave. The first thing that struck me was the smell. It was wretched.

I steeled myself against the smell and pushed forward to the mouth of the cave and then just inside.

Inside, carved on a small rock there was a message:

"To Open the Wall of Stone, You must bring the Prism home. Each color a corner of your very soul. Find the Troll, release the stones."

I read it and stood up. Looking deeper in the cave I saw a dull light. I continued towards it.

The smell became more unbearable when I went deeper in the cave. My eyes watered and welled with the rancid earthy smell that now penetrated my mind.

I saw quickly what lent to the smells nasty bite. The floor was covered in skeletons, half ripped apart corpses and dead animals. As I walked, it became harder to not step on the fetid ground, which was now more organic matter than stone.

I made my way to the light. There hunkered in the corner of a recess in the cave was the Troll.

The troll's skin was pale white and wrinkled. It had large arms and short stout legs. Matted, blood crusted hair fell to its shoulders in strings, like old leather hanging from a barn rafter.

It didn't see me, but seemed to hear me. When I stepped on a small bone that cracked with a quick snap its head jolted in my direction.

I was now able to see its face better. Where any humanoid creature would have eyes, it had nothing. A small jagged nose jutted out from the Trolls face and a huge gaping mouth opened to reveal a set of razor sharp fangs.

The light of the small fire that the creature huddled around was enough to make out enough to be terrified.

The troll turned its full body towards me and set in its pale, hairless chest was a large eye, about the size of a coconut.

The eye rolled in the socket and focused on me. The troll let out a roar as it discovered that its home had been invaded.

It rose on its short legs, equaling me in height but was about twice as wide.

Its arms bulges with muscle.

I swallowed a hard gulp as it began to come towards me.

I raised my club to strike. The troll quickly raised its left arm to block as its other reached for a large bone on the ground beside it.

I swung quickly, hitting the trolls arm with enough force to cause my hand significant pain.

The troll quickly swung the bone it held at me.

I jumped backward only missing the strike by centimeters. He swung again and I blocked with the club.

The rock I had tied on the end came loose and fell to the floor. Cursing, I quickly grabbed it and threw it at the troll.

The rock shot through the air with a crackle and struck the troll in chest, blinding the large eye that was rolling around.

The eye began to gush blood, as the troll began to scream in agony.

I raised my club and struck the blinded beast in the head twice. He stumbled back and began to swing the bone in a berserk frenzy. I stumbled backwards and fell, my hands only finding the soft dead tissue that the troll had left to rot.

The troll brought the bone down swiftly and connected with my left arm. I felt the bone break in two pieces.

I screamed in agony. I had never broken a bone before and this was a particularly bad situation to discover the pain.

I stood, adrenaline pumping yelled and with thunderous strength and fury swung my club down upon the trolls head.

The crack of the troll's skull sounded with a sickening creak and bang as it spit in two.

The troll fell backwards, blood pouring from the wound in its head. It wouldn't live much longer.

I quickly ran towards the troll's fire where it had a small bowl made from wood. In the bowl rested 9 stones. I grabbed them and put them in my bag.

As I doubled back over the troll's corpse, I grabbed the stone I had thrown at it. There was something about it, the way it flew when I threw it.

I put it in my bag as well and continued out of the cave.

I fell to the ground at the opening on the cave and almost choked on the fresh air. The stagnant, decaying air of the cave was now ingrained in my mind, but I sighed as the fresh air soon replaced it in my thoughts.

I stood and walked back to my camp, and the door.

I sat in my shelter, and braced my arm with two sticks and some vines, in order to let it heal relatively straight.

The Doorway – Open

The door stood tall before me. Now that I had the means to open it, it strangely seemed more intimidating.

I stood in front of the symbol, and pressed the colored stones into each recess. I still remembered the order from my dream.

When the final stone fell into place, the door began to shift. I thought, when I first saw it, that it would simply slide into the ground when opened. However when I pressed the stones into it, it began to fade from reality. It slowly became more transparent and disappeared.

It opened into a tunnel no more than 100 meters long. The tunnel was dark, and only the light at the end gave me any clue as to what might reside inside.

I stepped in the tunnel and began to move forward. The darkness surrounded me and invited me inside.

In the tunnel the dreams of my parents and friends flashed in my head. The images of them decaying only drove me to get to the end faster. The visions subsided as the light from the other end of the tunnel washed over me.

At the end, a massive stone staircase rose from the opening of the tunnel and disappeared from sight further up the mountain.

I put my foot on the first stair, and began to climb.

Endless Climb

The stairs never ended it seemed.

The steps, each one after the other were becoming steeper and steeper.

I had only gone up 400 steps, as I counted them, but it felt like 1000.

I only just realized as well that I hadn't eaten. It had been days but my strength remained and I was not hungry.

I wondered what might cause something like this, then I remembered the Sap and Nectar I had with the Elmsmen. It must have sated my hunger and thirst, but for how long?

I kept climbing. Every stair was one step closer to my goal. The stone staircase wrapped up the side of the mountains slope, taking me around the other side of the mountain. I saw many of the same things I had on the side that I had climbed up. Trees, small creeks, forests and flat clearings. One thing did stand out on the other side however.

At the bottom of the other mountain, there was a large lake. I was interested, but not enough to abandon my quest.

I continued to climb up and around the upper parts of the mountain.

I continued counting as well. 5000. I had climbed 5000 steps. I sat on the 5001st and watched the sun set.

I wasn't tired, but I slept anyway.

I awoke in the very early morning, and started to climb again.

I climbed throughout the day. Up and up and up. At 9000 steps it began to snow.

The snow fluttered on the wind and twirled with each new breath of wind.

I was very cold. My shirt and pants were both dirty and ragged, and not enough for winter traveling, however I pushed on.

I reached the 11000 step by dark and collapsed at the top. I fell asleep, this time exhausted from my quickened pace.

I dreamed again, as I now always do.

Manifest Death

From the darkness before my eyes, a bird.

The bird fluttered and landed on my finger that was now outstretched.

It began to sing a song. Not a typical bird song, but instead, low fluid notes.

I sat and listened. As the end of the song drew near, the bear began to change.

The bird took the form of the Mother of the Mountain.

She sat before me and stared into me.

"I know you are weary. This will not change, but only worsen. I will help you when the time comes, but until then you must remain strong and stand by your path."

I hesitated, I didn't know what she meant. I was beaten up, broken and tired.

"You will know when I come to you. For now, keep going, be strong"

As she faded from the dream, her image was replaced by the images of my parent and friends dying once again.

I didn't understand those visions, but they still plagued me.

Feast of Flesh

I sat startled awake by a sharp pang of hunger in my stomach.

I hadn't eaten in a very long time and the Elmsmans nectar had worn off.

My stomach growled at me like an angry dog. For the first time since I had come here, I really took a look at myself.

I was sunburned, sore, and wasting away. It seemed the nectar simply staved hunger away, rather than providing any sort of nutrition.

I sat, surrounded by fluttering snow that flickered in the morning light, wondering how I would find something, anything to eat.

I stood up, my legs now weak, and strode forward into the snow. I walked on for about 20 minutes until I found myself in a bank of snow.

I couldn't go on any longer. My strength was depleted, I was chilled to the bone, and there was not a single twig or berry on the snowy peak to eat. I collapsed.

I laid face down in the snow, and groaned.

As if out of nowhere, a faint noise began. It started in silence and continued louder and louder. It sounded like distant chimes, a calming ringing noise that gently wafted across the peak of the mountain.

I lifted my head to see origin of the noise. To my surprise, my broken and bruised arm now glowed with a soft golden color.

Curious, I stood, feeling my strength coming back to me in waves.

I remembered the Mothers words:

"I know you are weary. This will not change, but only worsen. I will help you when the time comes, but until then you must remain strong and stand by your path."

I looked at my arm again and suddenly, out of instinct sunk my teeth into the skin.

I expected an unpleasant feeling, a foul crunch and warm blood filling my mouth.

What I received was much different. The skin tore away easily, tender and succulent. The taste was one that I never thought I would taste again. Sweet, hearty, savory... the best thing I've ever eaten.

I continued to chew, drawn by the addicting flavor and aromas. The smells, they brought images of my childhood, making pies with my grandmother, cooked roast, and thanksgiving.

I stopped chewing.

All things I would never see again. Where was I? On earth? Was I dead? As questions clouded my mind, the humming chimes stopped, replaced by howling winds. The smells faded from the air, and instead the foul air whooshed by in stagnant gusts.

I began to taste metallic blood in my mouth, I felt skin between my teeth.

Despite all of this however, I also felt strong, stronger than I had ever felt before.

I looked down. Horror struck me. My arm was limp on my lap. The skin and muscle gone, and instead just bone. My hand was intact, but with the tendons and muscles of my arm gone, it hung loose.

I had eaten past the severed bone almost up to my bicep. I sat, in shock.

Then it started, a searing pain at first faint, but then excruciating.

As soon as it began, it was over. I had passed out.

Fairlight

The darkness was pierced almost instantly.

A gentle warmth overtook me as a blue light shown from above me. Soon it consumed all around me, and lifted me from the abyss.

"You have come so far" a voice echoed.

I couldn't quite place it, however it sounded as if all of the people I once knew were talking in a cacophony of voices.

"You must finish the climb." again, a jumble of familiar voices.

I was dazed, the light from above grew stronger and warmer.

As if out of nowhere, figures began to dance, silhouettes on the external light. Dark figures, with features that my eyes couldn't make out, flourished and ebbed against the light.

I felt my eyes grow heavy. I wanted to sleep.

I mustered my voice.

"Where am I, what is this place?"

At first nothing, then faintly.

"The Mountain"

"What Mountain, where?"

Silence.

"Who are you?"

"We are you."

"Me?"

"You."

My eyes drooped once again, but I fought it.

"Why should I keep climbing?"

"Because you must"

"Why though? What's the point? The whole thing is pointless, after the top, you go down the other side. The same hardships, the same problems, the same mountain."

The voice drew closer, and was now a single voice. The voice of my father.

"The climb is not about the Mountain. It is not about the problems and hardships. Instead the climb is about you. Remember who you are, who you were, and remember that you will never be the same."

The voice changed, my mother now spoke to me.

"The climb is to show you that there is always a point, on the other side of this mountain, there are a hundred more. Each one different and each with its own reward."

The voice changed again. I didn't recognize it at first, but then it came to me. A woman I loved, lost somewhere now.

"You must always continue, because you don't climb for the mountain, you climb for yourself, your experiences and those who love you."

I stared, surrounded by white. I didn't have anything to say, I was no longer angry, but rather content.

A sound, not a voice, but a whooshing. The light dimmed, as did my sight.

Dreaming

I awoke. The cold air rushing over me.

I was still on the mountain.

I looked up. The top was only about a hundred yards up.

I felt strong again, and warm. I remembered my arm and quickly glanced down.

It looked as if I had never had an arm at all. Where my forearm once was, there was nothing.

The gaping hole was no longer there, instead no bone, nothing, just smooth skin.

I touched the patch at the end of my arm. Despite the wound healing, it still felt foreign to have no arm there.

I looked up again. Not impossible.

I strode forward, anew, vigorous.

I began to climb, one hand pulling, while my newly shortened arm dug in the snow for balance. I pulled myself up and up.

Just as it seemed my body would fail me, I threw my weight up and onto the peak.

I grabbed at the jutting rocks with my hand, clinging. The wind gusted and blew all around me carrying snow like ashes from some great fire.

I sighed, I had made it.

I breathed in and out and took it in. From the top I could see all around. A lake on one side and a forest that stretched on forever on the other. The sky was grey and there were no clouds save for the ones below me.

I drunk it in like a runner replenishing with cool, crisp water.

I started to laugh. I had done it.

Just as I calmed down a bit, I felt a twinge. The hair on the back of my neck stood up.

I then felt a force push my back that had no compromise, no parallel. My grip was upheaved and I fell.

I fell, and fell. Rolling, tumbling, slipping and grasping my way down the other side of the mountain.

I felt my bones break, my organs jostle and my mind was screaming in every direction.

I was still awake, awake for all of it. I prayed for a dream, to the mother, to god, anyone.

I hit the ground, I no longer felt anything. I felt calm.

I couldn't move, all my bones and muscles had broken and betrayed my orders to move.

I couldn't laugh. Or breathe. My vision faded to darkness.

I died on the slope of the mountain. I couldn't remember how I had come to be here.
I probably didn't want to know.

This Endless Journey

Thank you for downloading The Mountain.

I appreciate the support either paid or otherwise.

I wrote this album about a difficult time in my life. It is a story that I have dreamed many nights, and as much as I willed it, I never thought it would be done. As important of a journey as this was, it was one that took a lot of time.

The music just kind of came together, as did the stories.

I can't help but say that this journey mirrors my own struggles with depression.

While I say today I don't suffer as badly as I used to, I still believe that there are parts of me that come up every once in awhile.

Recently, I've seen some people I love dearly go through similar experiences to mine, and while I wish I could climb the mountain for them, I cannot. I only want this to serve as a guide, a helpful primer, that all mountains can be overcome.

I would like to dedicate these songs and stories to the following people.

My parents, for teaching me that there are always more mountains to climb.

My good friend Billy Shepard, for whom without, I would not be a musician. I only hope he sees the top of his mountain soon.

My friend Dominic DeBellis, who has climbed his own mountains, and still dreams of his.

Finally, to the past. To the people of my past who are no longer here. Those who shaped me, but never got to see who I am because of them. I thank you, all of you. I hope that your own experiences have been as grand as mine.

Thank you, and until next time.

Zackariah Rucker

Allomone is Zackariah Rucker

Guitar, Bass, Vocals, Synths - Zackariah Rucker

Drums - David Crispin, supplemental tracking by Zackariah Rucker

All stories and artwork by Zackariah Rucker

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