

**T**he uninhabited peninsular of jungle marking the border between Indonesia and Sarawak reached into the South China sea with sandy shores shelving into the shallow coral beds teeming with the beautiful miracles of life. A young man on holiday from boarding school with his parents, a guide and the cook, slept on the sand each night, contentedly exhausted from each day's fishing and snorkelling. Their open prahu was peacefully anchored close by, the only vessel between this idyllic beach and the nearest village some fifteen miles to the East.

That day while his companions rested in the mid-day sun after a late-night fishing, he wandered along the shore clad only in his swim trunks and wondering what lay within the impenetrable jungle behind. He relished freedom from constant companionship, the past day and night clamour of school boys, enjoying the present opportunity to walk alone on a beach. But the jungle was a challenge: could it be explored? He sensed a fear of the unknown, but seeing a small break where a now dry river broke through the wall of dark green, he rose to the challenge and leaving his fishing companions on the beach, the young man ventured South, un-noticed into the jungle. He wanted to be free for a while to adventure on his own. The jungle was un-inhabited as far as he was aware, and overcoming his fear of all danger he continued up the steep dry riverbed. Soon he was out of sight of the beach and gaining in confidence as he leapt from large boulder to large boulder climbing further up the course which he knew would flow with a fast-tropical torrent when it rained.

The jungle was closed in on both sides with tall trees and dense undergrowth, and lit from the parting created by the riverbed. After a while he paused: he felt the true wildness of the tropical jungle. Conscious of his coming from human civilization, he suddenly felt out of place. He had a strange urge to leave society and be at one with the beauty of this wilderness: to be wildly at one with it. So, overcoming his inhibitions, he carefully removed his trunks, his last outward vesture of civilization. Should he leave them and go deeper into the jungle? He decided to accept that challenge, and chose the top of a large bare rock to leave his trunks, placing a stone on top to clearly mark the location for his return journey.

His elation rose; he felt unencumbered by civilization. Feeling totally at one with the wilderness around him, he now leaped from boulder to boulder with new zest: and the afternoon sun shone down between the tall trees bathing his naked body with her bronze light. He knew there were no eyes watching him, he was one with the jungle aura.

He lost track of time for an hour or more while enjoying the feeling of his new freedom: free of the fear of what others might be thinking of him. And free of the responsibility of behaving the way he thought others expected him to behave: free of the fear of censure. Eventually he stopped to rest. He noted the position of the sun, he knew that he had to return soon before it sank and night fell fast. He wasn't able to see the clouds gathering a pace over the sea as they raced towards the mountains to the South, as they did late each afternoon, unloading themselves with their tropical rain as the mountains forced them to rise into cooler air.

Reluctantly he decided to return to the beach – return to civilization and to the camp and to the other people. But at least he reflected, he would enjoy the return journey, then don his trunks again and wander back out of the jungle refreshed with his secret- the secret of his new found freedom.

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