



THE POWER WITHIN

Paulo Coelho, bestselling author of the inspiring classic *The Alchemist*, writes a touching New Year story for New Idea about finding your inner strength

Many years ago, there lived on the island of Hokkaido in Japan a young man called Humi, who earned his living breaking stones. Although he was strong and healthy, he was not content with his destiny, and complained about it day and night.

He did not properly understand Christian traditions, but he learnt that at least once a year all humanity's wishes were granted. And so on Christmas Day he prayed earnestly, and to his surprise an angel appeared before him.

'You're healthy and have your whole life in front of you,' the angel said to him.

'All young men have to start off doing something. Why are you always complaining?'

'God has treated me unfairly and hasn't given me the chance to grow,' Humi said.

Concerned, the angel went to ask the Lord for his help in ensuring that his protegee did not end up losing his soul.

'Do as you wish,' the Lord said. 'Since it's Christmas, everything that Humi wants will be granted to him.'

The following day, Humi was hard at work breaking stones when he saw a carriage pass by bearing a nobleman laden with jewels. Wiping the sweat from his dirty face, Humi said bitterly: 'Why can't I be a nobleman too? That is my destiny!'

'So be it!' murmured his angel.

And Humi was transformed into the owner of a sumptuous palace with a vast

estate, with many servants and horses. He went out every day with his train of followers, and enjoyed seeing his former companions lined up by the roadside, gazing respectfully up at him.

On one such afternoon the heat was unbearable – even under his golden parasol Humi was sweating as much as he did in his days as a breaker of stones.

He realised then that he wasn't really that important – above him were princes and emperors, but higher than them all was the sun, who obeyed no one. The sun was the true king.

'Dear angel, why can't I be the sun? That must be my destiny!' Humi whined.

'So be it!' exclaimed the angel, trying to conceal his sadness at such ambition. And so, just as he had wanted, Humi became the sun.

While he was shining in the sky, admired for his immense power to ripen the grain or scorch it as he wished, a black spot started moving towards him. The dark stain grew larger and larger, and Humi realised it was a cloud spreading all around him, so that he could no longer see the earth.

'Angel!' Humi cried. 'The cloud is stronger than the sun! My destiny is to be a cloud!'

'So be it!' sighed the angel.

Humi was transformed into a cloud, and he thought he had finally realised his dream.

'I'm so powerful!' he yelled as he obscured the sun.

'I'm invincible!' he thundered as he chased the waves.

But on the deserted ocean shore stood a vast granite rock, as old as the world itself. Humi thought that the rock was defying him, and unleashed a storm such as the world had never seen. Vast, furious waves lashed the rock, trying to wrench it from the earth and hurl it into the depths of the sea.

Firm and impassive, the rock remained where it was.

'Angel,' Humi sobbed. 'The rock is stronger than the cloud! My destiny is to be a rock!'

So Humi was transformed into the rock.

'Who can vanquish me now?' he wondered. 'I am the most powerful thing in the world!'

Several years passed, until one morning Humi felt something stabbing into his stone entrails. This was followed by intense pain, as if part of his granite body was being broken into pieces. Then he heard dull, insistent thuds and felt again that terrible pain.

Mad with fear, he cried: 'Angel, someone is trying to kill me! He has more power than I do. I want to be like him!'

'So be it!' declared the angel, weeping.

And that was how Humi went back to breaking stones.

'Who can
vanquish me
now?'

Paulo Coelho is the acclaimed author of *The Alchemist*. His 10 inspirational books, translated into 56 languages, have topped bestseller lists around the world and become the subject of social and cultural debate.



Through his words, Paulo touches and inspires people to look within, to follow their dreams and to become the best they can be.

Of this story, he says: 'The idea of not understanding the miracle of life and of allowing greed to take the place of generosity is an interesting warning to send to all those searching for their dreams.'

The Brazilian author's inspirational new book is *Eleven Minutes* (HarperCollins, \$29.95).

For more information log on to www.paulocoelho.com.

