



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you so much for coming. My name is Jonathan Groubert and I'm an American public radio journalist and interviewer.

These are often moments of great inspiration.

As far as I can tell, the moment of inspiration for the New York Times best selling novel *All the Light We Cannot See* goes like this.

Accomplished and multi-prizewinning author Anthony Doerr is sitting in a train from New Jersey to New York to visit his publisher. There's a man talking on his cellphone within earshot. He's talking with someone about the movie *The Matrix* and they go into a tunnel and his call drops. The guy gets really, really angry. Anthony Doerr sees this and thinks something else entirely. He thinks, and I'm paraphrasing here, he thinks, "We're forgetting that electromagnetic waves are magic. They're a miracle. Once upon a time we had to see people to talk, now we're surrounded by waves and communication and speech." This is the light we cannot see, as Anthony has said in many interviews.

I suspect there's more to it than that, but we'll get to that in a minute.

This book is about a lot of things, actually:

The loss of innocence.

Boy eventually meets girl.

Locks and locksmiths.

Mythological gems.

The barbarity of the destruction of culture.

Distant voices crackling over radio waves that bring wonder and hope to a world that is hopeless.

And the desire by a few to preserve some sense of civility in the face of the pointless horrors of war.

All the Light We Cannot See is epic in its scale and in its eye for minutiae. It takes us the length of the Second World War, from Paris to Essen, Berlin and St. Malo, an old walled city in Brittany, France. Its timeline runs from the end of the 30's to 2014. There are carpet bombings and blitzkrieg and invasions and lots and lots of radio waves.

But then Anthony Doerr was an accomplished and lauded author well before he wrote this novel. He's written collections of short stories, including the Story Prize winning collection *The Memory Wall*.

Anthony is a prolific essayist with titles like: *“When you’re fourteen, wet, cold, and in the Alaskan wilderness, only one thing can help...”*

Or....

“For seven days we grinned like drunken fools, swam with sharks, hand-fed stingrays, found a cone snail as big as a motorcycle helmet, tore open coconuts with our teeth, and waited in line for grilled prawns behind Lionel Ritchie.” Anthony’s essay about a family trip to Bora Bora.

He also won the Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy in Rome - which actually brought him and his family to Europe for a while. This trip played its part in the germination of *All the Light You Cannot See*.

Anthony also, and I’ll ask him about this, writes a science column for the Boston Globe.

Ladies and gentlemen, Anthony Doerr.

Jonathan Groubert

Amsterdam, 7 April 2015