

THE
BOOK
OF
WANDS

Sample
Chapter

NEIL SLADE

CONTACT and COPYRIGHT

The Book of Wands

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WARNING!!

This book should be kept out of the reach of children.

It is advised that all adults in the possession of this book take precautions to keep this book hidden in such places not to arouse suspicion in the case of readers under the age of 16, and certainly in the case of potential readers under the age of 12 years of age.

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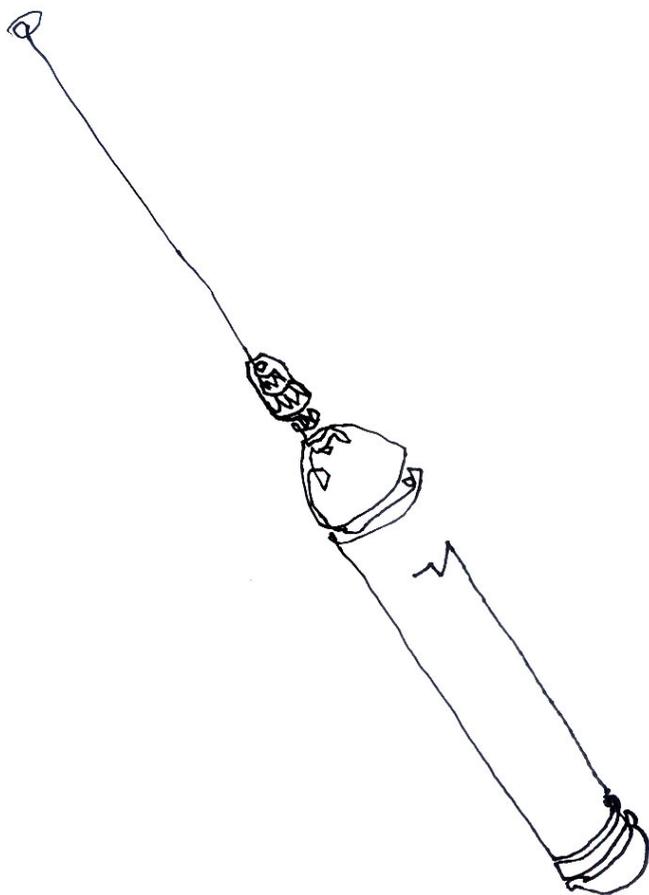
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THE
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Chapter 52

Furry Jones

Above and to my left, me back on the couch that is, upon a shelf filled with oddly shaped glass appliances, globes and pipes, is a maroon fire dragon protecting me as best he can. He has been eyeing me for the past two years, his dragony voice increasing in decibels each day, prodding me with his fiery breath, “Get a move on, pal.” He moves so slow, most don’t notice him at all. It’s ironic.

Next to him sits a JAR.

That Jar is extremely important to me, as is all Jars to all Travelers.

The Jar is a token bestowed upon me by one of my most important teachers, the illustrious Furry Jones, a Traveler with an international reputation, not directly for Traveling, but for comedy.

One of his immortal comedy bits has him stoutly defending his claim as “The Man With Three Buttocks”.

Of course, no normal person suspects Furry as being a Traveler per se, as this is among the most uncommon, as much as it would be the foolish of claims. Such a self-definition would have him truly branded as an insane person, not just a comedian, never mind a human with improbably three cheeks.

Travelers know other Travelers are in the vicinity in the same way that a snow leopard knows that another snow leopard is on the same mountain even with thirty miles of snow in between each.

To most Lumps, Traveling would seem as ridiculous as imagining as Einstein did one day, as what it would be like to ride upon a beam of light.

So it is with Travelers. I don't refer to those people who ride on buses, fly on a plane to Paris, or cruise on a ship to Bermuda. I speak of *Travelers*, as in manipulate and explore with a Wand. These Travelers are by conventional standards self-admittedly plainly ridiculous. They often don't even remember to put their socks on before tying their laces. And even then when they do remember, they don't bother to anyway.

Einstein didn't like to wear socks. He didn't like the way his big toe always seemed to make a hole in them, so he stopped wearing them altogether.

Surely, I would be labeled a demented and crazy idiot if I were to try to seriously publicize, capitalize upon, advertise, or announce to the world a similar talent for all to ridicule on the public stage,

“Hello everybody, I'm a Traveler, and you can too!”

They said Einstein was crazy for quite some time.

Doubtless, the truth of this story is actually a secretive one that will surely escape the serious consideration of most, and be looked upon as mere nutty fantasy. If not, the world will have lost its collective marbles. Yippee. It will be about time.

Perhaps I might have fun revealing all of this Traveling stuff- and cloak it under a blanket which I will call “Fiction”.

Now that would be a good one.

Only the mutants ready to Travel would see through the disguise.

Being secretive is much more than just being “out of sight”. Something can be in plain sight, and 99.99999% will walk right by and

see NOTHING, and the something will remain a complete secret. That's how most of the You-niverse is.

Ruti Baegel, once picked up a fresh twenty dollar bill lying on the sidewalk in her school courtyard. The bill was lying in plain site among a crowd of several dozen people. Although the money was in plain sight by all, no one could see it except Ruti.

In exactly the same way, although this text might in time eventually lie on every coffee table in every living west of the St. Louis, most people sipping their demitasse with pinkie extended will, with absolute certainty, look upon this diary as harmless entertainment, or joke. Hahahaha. It will be a cosmic joke on them.

Truth is often laughed at.

And missed.

The brain already filters out the majority of information the eyes and ears pickup. The wonderment of an infant or young child is plainly seen in their eyes from the time they are picked up out of the crib or led by the hand out into the world each day. But in order to survive in the wildly wicked forest of Earthly Delights and Temptations, a human is culturally conditioned to consistently apply socially accepted consciousness filters. These filters are learned from parents, teachers, peers, and politicians. What passes through the cosmic coffee filter meets the definition of accepted reality.

Remove those filters chemically, as shamans have done with select plants over the millennia, and suddenly one faces an unbelievable psychedelic cornucopia of mind boggling perception and insight. This kind of botanical induced circus is not the result of hallucinations, but rather layers of ignored reality, now revealed and uncovered to the filter removed brain.

Those who *GET IT*, will get it. This text distributed as commonly as a driver's license willy nilly like so much public confetti, can provide a service to those in need, to those who by physical distance remain incommunicado from easy access to a master and genuine Wand instruction. To the rest, Traveling will remain a cloaked and undetectable lark and ludicrous notion.

It will pay my rent.

Perhaps I am a magician after all.

Hidden from "sensible" logic, Traveling is no more sensible or logical as talking to your dog, as if your four legged buddy could truly understand the most complex of one's thoughts, dreams, and creative ideas beyond, "Would you like carrots on your kibble tonight?"

Of course, as a Traveler, you indeed might routinely discuss every aspect of your daily existence, problems, and hypothetical solutions with your wet nosed companion; because it would be a complete and utter waste of opportunity to discard the canine perspective not to.

Doesn't everybody talk to their dog, at length?

Seriously?

I can't believe people waste such good perspective and intelligence.

"Erfie," I said to him just this morning, "Why am I having such inertia getting all of my notes going?" I was clearly feeling frustration in the constant and seemingly infinite interruptions befuddling progress on these very words before you.

Erfie sat and gave me a placid look, then turned his head around and down to lick his right back foot. He paused, felt satisfied that his

tongue had applied sufficient wet stimulation to his middle big dog toe, and looked up at me again.

“You haven’t been ready yet. The nut has been stuck, but you’ve applied the proper penetrating oil. The Energy in the Jar is now sufficient. Tonight, you will be ready to get into high gear and the nut will come loose. You will write with great abandon.”

Yes, Erfie, I see.

You, see?

Right >>HERE<<

There I go and went. Yessirie, we are moving right along now!

I scratch behind his ear, and he cocks his head at an angle, “Aw yeah yeah, that’s it--- that’s IT!” Erfie says.

If I only accomplish one thing in this life, I will be satisfied that I made my dog happy on a regular basis.

Furry Jones is no relation to Erfie, in fact, he isn’t even the same species. Erfie is plainly a dog, with a blue collar, no fleas, and a wagging tail, whereas Furry has only ever resembled a canine in his scraggly mane of a chaotic haircut.

Furry is a good ten or more years older than I in my estimation, and his hair style continues to reflect the Beetlesque mop top sensibilities that he was allowed to express in his mid to late twenties, while I was still a middle school lad not even yet wet behind the ears at twelve or thirteen.

My junior high school yearbook picture shows myself as a horn rimmed be speckled, slightly shy and perhaps insecure, possibly neurotic looking kid who had not yet been on his first date. Simultaneously, half way across the world Furry was already an experienced Traveler, making his mark on the world, long sideburns and all. And he had been on plenty of dates.

He was on TV.

He was enjoying fame and reasonable fortune.

He was getting fans and groupies.

It would not be for yet another forty years that I would finally meet Furry in person on this mundane planet. But yet, we would meet hundreds of times in other realms, and I would learn my lessons from him well.

I would see him on TV, and then meet him in the In-Between Space. But as with any important person in your life, you eventually meet their molecules.

This is often the case between Travelers, in that your closest allies and greatest teachers may only pass your way physically in very sporadic and brief encounters, in which only a quick handshake and few words will ever be exchanged in a lifetime.

But in other dimensions, in universes both conscious and unconscious, the meetings twixt master and student will be extended and deep.

Another John besides the previously noted Flamexx also had untold influence on me. One John McLaughing, the perennial jazz rock guitarist and one of the inventors of Jazz Fission had remained another one of my heroes for thirty years. I had always wanted to meet him, but never could. I had not missed a concert of his since 1972 even though I

had gone backstage several times to meet him at several concerts, but it was never in the cards.

He is most famous for being both an inventor of many styles of guitar playing, but probably more famous for being the fastest guitar player this side of Pluto.

Finally, upon his tenth visit to my neck of the woods, with his guitar neck slung around his neck, I decided it was time to put myself in the right place at the right time with the greatest possible effort. John was scheduled to appear at the Boulder Theater outside of Denver, and I had ordered my tickets three months in advance. I was to sit in the seventh row. It would be a glorious show, and with my binoculars, I could watch every finger in action and also see if he had bothered to clean his nails that night.

I had bought tickets for six of my friends, most of whom I would rendezvous outside the theater before the show. However, I had gone up with one of my students, Weston, and we had arrived hours early so we could sneak in the stage door and approach him mano to mano so I could shake hando to hando. I had brought a few sheets of my own music to hand to him as a gesture of my appreciation for all the inspiration he had supplied me with over the many years. He probably gets this sort of thing in every town he visits, but I, of course, thought I was SPECIAL.

To my great disappointment however, even though we had managed to gain illicit entrance along with the road crew in through the back door, John was nowhere to be seen. The best I could do would be to leave my hand written copies of my music with a stage hand. No hand shake, just a second hand connection. Oh well.

Thus, we shortly joined the long waiting line in front of the theater to gain entrance, yet another hour away.

But to my great stupendous surprise, twenty minutes in line, who of all people comes walking up to the main entrance, the very same door as all of us seriously less famous and infinitely less talented ordinary people- but mister Magic Fingers himself, John McLaughing, guitar in hand. Right to the front door, carrying his own instrument as if he was a lowly porter at the Holiday Inn.

Immediately, he was surrounded by a swarm of fans, all clamoring for his attention, including one guy holding his K-Mart First Act brand acoustic guitar over the crowd begging John to sign his autograph on it with a magic marker.

Well, I wasn't going to be one of THOSE lowlifes, no sirree Bob.

I just kept my place in line, and told myself that I would be content to hear John play his fluid lyrical riffs that night, that would be enough. Darn. Too bad he hadn't come earlier when I was back stage all by myself.

Before long my other friends joined me and we all sat stupefied for the length of the concert, certainly one that shall always remain in my memory as a cherished experience of superlative aural rapture and delight.

We gathered outside the theater to reminisce about the experience that had just ended moments before. "That was incredible!" "How many notes do you think he played tonight? A billion? No, it was a trillion!!!"

We were so overcome with joy, we had worked up a more than healthy appetite and all congregated in the garden level restaurant next door, The Mount Everest Tibetan Retreat.

This place was particularly appropriate that evening as John was also famous for his early days of mixing meditation with giant Marshall guitar amplifiers turned up to 120 decibels, as well as studying with Sri

Chin Ahoy, his monastic guru from the Himalayas, who ultimately became the meditation master for the United Nations Security Council during the late 1960's. Obviously, this group didn't take meditation as seriously as they took Mutual Assured Destruction.

None the less, we had a wonderful meal, none of the dishes of which I could actually identify what I was eating. But it was filling.

I finally had to admit to all in attendance around the communal round table, laying my soul bare in confessional at the end of the meal. "I guess I was pretty disappointed that I didn't get to meet John McLaughing before the show and give him my music, but I know we really had a Cosmic Connection through that fabulous jazz interpretation of *Climb Every Mountain* that he played tonight. He was way better than Julie Andrews.

After leaving a substantial tip for our waiter, Wangchuk, we all climbed with our full bellies full up the steep steps to sidewalk level. Fortunately this was not as great a challenge as getting to Camp Two on the actual snowy peaks of Chomolungma or **सगरमाथा** as the natives say.

We began to go our separate ways, and I waved goodbye to our companions while Weston and my friend Sky who were riding back to Denver with me turned to go towards our car. Suddenly Weston stopped dead in his tracks, and pointed directly across the street to a man standing on the corner of 14th and Spruce, guitar case in hand.

"Look!" Weston exclaimed out loud. "There's John!!"

I couldn't believe my eyes.

Here I had come hours early, snuck backstage to no avail, had been beaten away from my hero by obnoxious autograph hounds before the show, I had ultimately surrendered completely to my abandoned hopes and dreams—and yet- and yet---

There he was, yards away, waiting for the light to change.

Well, I'm not STUPID.

I ran across the street, sweaty hand extended, exclaiming in utter redemption and teary delight, "John! John! I just want to say 'Hi!' I'm one of your most favorite musicians in the whole world! Wait... I mean, you're one of my most favorite musicians ever!"

He politely responded with a genuine smile once he realized I wasn't going to molest him or cause him bodily harm, "Oh hello, nice to meet you, did you enjoy the show?" he replied in a thick British accent, extending his noticeably dry palm towards mine in civil acknowledgement. This struck me as particularly ironic since they get a whole lot more rain in London than we do in Colorado.

And yes, his nails were clean.

How strange, and yet how perfectly appropriate.

You try and try and try to do something, to get something accomplished, to live your very dreams, and yet you fail repeatedly.

Finally, exhausted, you give up entirely, and just go on your way, having let go of your attachments, your insistence on perfection in the universe, and suddenly, BAM, it's like magic. You suddenly find yourself in the right place at the right time. You get IT delivered on a silver plate.

Well, in this case, it was closer to a water main cover plate embedded in the street, but you know what I mean.

This memory stayed with me for a long time.

As it turned out, it was another seven years before John McLaughing would return to Colorado. I hadn't missed one of his concerts in thirty years, and I certainly wasn't going to miss one now.

On that occasion my student Weston had already gone on his way and was working his way up in the world of professional photography in Manhattan. But my old friend Sky was still around, and so was my student and coconspirator in all things, Bobby Spaghetti.

This time, we didn't leave so early, as my dream of meeting John had long been fulfilled seven years previous, but we did arrive about an hour before the show.

We walked to the theater, myself in Teacher Guru mode explaining to my student Bobby how all things happen in their time, effortlessly when they are ready, when you have surrendered desire and longing and just let things BE, kinda like in that famous song..

“Oh brother,” said Bobby.

“I'm not kidding,” I urged him.

Bobby looked at Sky, who was even older than I was by several years. “Listen to your elders!” Sky scolded Bobby, and then laughed, as we all did.

I had to admit, I can get a little long winded. But I continued my tale unabated anyway. I recounted the entire story of the last John McLaughing concert, and how we had shown up early and failed, and how the crowd in front of the theater discouraged me from approaching John before the show when he just walked up to the door, and how as we finished the last bite of unidentified Asian cuisine I revealed my innermost regret in failing to actually physically contact my hero after thirty years of unsuccessful attempts.

And then, I continued, “So we were walking down this very street on our way back to the car, and there, right across the street on that exact corner right there, stood with guitar case in hand, John McLaughing.” And I held my arm up and pointed to the same actual

corner which we were now passing by across the street, “Yep, right there was...”

And at that moment, my eyes fell out of the sockets in my head. Because on that day seven years later, standing on the same corner in the exact same spot as before was:

John McLaughing, guitar case in hand, waiting for the light to change.

I kid you not.

I have two witnesses.

This is the mountain god’s honest truth.

I swear on the eternal spirit of Chomolungma this really happened.

Twice on the same corner.

Seven years apart.

Same guy.

So standing there, witnessing this very miracle before my eyes, something that I am certain any rational person could only think that I am making up such a story, I could only think of one thing to do, and that was to yell out across the street, to the man, this giant, my hero, my inspiration of thirty seven years:

“Hey John, you can cross now!”



(Chapter, continued...)

I first met Furry in La Paz, Bolivia late one Sunday night, perhaps twenty years ago, a time of much political upheaval. There were nightly clashes between the local police and a stubborn crime family trying to wring control from the city government. But enough of that- I have little patience with politics in general, or in the case of South America, little patience with generals in politics. Furry was there working on a TV series. I was there because I was Traveling.

We met in a dimly lit gathering place on the edge of town, the sound of rapid gunfire far in the distance.

He sat alone at a table, and as I came in, I immediately recognized him.

“Furry Jones?” I exclaimed, stopping at his table, lit from the lights of the bar across the room and from a lonely flickering candle sitting inside a cracked yellow wax coated glass.

He smiled a friendly but crooked smile, a distinct diagonal close lipped slant from upper right to lower left. “Yeah. That’s me.”

Of course it was. It could be no one else.

I held out my hand to shake his.

“Do you want an autograph?” he politely enquired, smiling coyly.

“Oh no no,” I replied, quickly shaking my head and simultaneously shaking his hand at the same time. “Oh! Wait a second,” I pulled a Jar out of a backpack that I had on. “Could you sign this for me? After all, you showed me what I can put in Jars even before I ever knew what they were!”

I pulled out a big thick permanent ink felt marker from my pack and handed it to him which he used to sign the outside of my Jar. He then handed back my Pen with a wink. He knew. After that, I realized that

the Pen would be an invaluable Wand for me as well, forever embedded with his Furry mojo.

He pulled out a wooden chair, gesturing to me to sit down. This lifted a small pile of dust off the dirt floor, making the smallest scraping noise in the otherwise quiet room. “Sit down, Niles.”

Furry raised his arm half way and silently motioned and nodded his head to the attention of a short dark haired woman bartender, who acknowledged his gesture. The barkeep put down the rag she was wiping the bar top with, and began to make her way to our wooden table.

“So,” Furry asked me in a private tone, “Have you found THE spot for your project yet?”

“Nyet for a long time,” I said. “Then about two weeks ago, nearly by accident I struck gold. I’m in a jungle now under a diamond dome. It is a tropical paradise. It takes me five minutes to Travel there.”

I raised my eyebrows, one to emphasize my point, but also expressing how impressed I was with how easily he slipped into this conversation, as if we had been talking face to face for years as established best friends. The bartender arrived at our table mid-paragraph.

She was a cherubic person, with long curly black hair, black narrow horn-rimmed glasses, an apron over a tight, too small aqua Hawaiian shirt, a green sweater with black buttons, and a mismatched dark red velvet skirt. A bizarre out of season south of the border Asian Christmas elf perhaps.

“You need another one?” she asked with a broad smile in perfect English.

Furry smiled politely, “No, I’m fine- but maybe in about ten minutes. What can I get you, Niles?”

I thought for a moment, “Have you got any hot tea?”

She responded in a soft, but deliciously charming tone, “Sure, English Breakfast or Earl Gray, take your pick.”

“Wow.” I observed. “You sound exactly like my girlfriend. She smiled back at me. Was I dreaming? “Um, Earl Gray sounds great. You got any honey?”

“Sure honey, I’ll get you some.”

She scurried off, raising a slight cloud of dust in the dirty floor as she spun around and headed off to the kitchen. Was she calling me “honey” or was she talking about the bee goop?

Wait. I can’t understand my girlfriend half the time. She can’t be my girlfriend.

Where was I? Who was this woman?

“I am always amazed at people who can learn a second language,” I said, watching her disappear. “Especially one so ridiculous as English. What happens when your first language is Chinese, and you speak perfect English, but you are surrounded by nothing but people who talk Spanish. I wonder what language you think in, you know?”

“I dunno,” said Furry, his face reflecting his serious contemplation of this question, as he scratched his head right above his right eyebrow.

I also wonder if Furry actually had an itch there, or if his scratch was some sort of behavioral habit accompanying his wonderment at my question.

“Furry,” I asked, cocking my head slightly to the left, “Did you scratch your head because it itched, or because that is a programmed behavioral habit you have when you wonder about something?”

“Gee, I don’t know!” he said with a furrowed brow, scratching slightly higher up his scalp this time.

I thought to myself later on, “Maybe an itch is just an inside question- and if not, what exactly *is* an itch?”

We both paused, saying nothing for a full ten seconds, and we both pondered this riddle.

“She came here with her husband who imports new VW Bugs from Below Horizontal in Brazil,” Furry finally remarked.

“Where’s he from?” I asked.”

“The former Czechoslovakia.” Furry came back. “You know, they still make new Beetles in Brazil.”

“No kidding,” I was surprised to hear.

“Yeah,” said Furry. It’s the only place in the world still cranking them out, and exactly like the German factory was turning them out in 1976.”

“Amazing.”

The bartender came walking back to our table, a paper napkin and a teaspoon in her hand, which she placed down in front of me. “Tea will be here in a second. We are out of honey. Do you want Saccharine?”

“No thanks, just plain sugar is fine.”

“Okey dokey..” she spun around and walked away again, raising another little dust devil.

Cough, I went. “She sounds EXACTLY like my girlfriend. I’m not kidding. I wonder if she IS my girlfriend,” I pondered.

“So, anyway, your Spot...” Furry returned to a long departed train of thought.

“Oh yeah, oh yeah,” I enthusiastically retorted. “It’s incredible!” I glanced up towards the dark ceiling, automatically grabbing the tea Spoon, as naturally as breathing, without looking and without thinking.

I held the Spoon up, closed my eyes, and began to slowly move the Spoon in a clockwise motion. It never fails to amaze me that

Westerners use cutlery several times a day, and yet they fail to see its true potential.

Furry immediately focused on my Spoon, and in a flash reached into his pocket, pulled out and held up a Spoon of his own. A smallish silver decorative collector Spoon that said, “Brighton Beach Hotel” on an enameled insignia on the handle end.

“I never go anywhere without it,” he remarked casually, looking at me completely dead pan.

I looked at his Spoon and then looked back at Furry, a slightly quizzical expression apparently on my face. He was momentarily taken aback, obviously trying to figure out what I had seen in his own Spoon.

He held the Spoon in front of his face, turning the bowl side towards himself, and chuckled ever so slightly.

“Haha,” he uttered, and began cleaning off the Spoon with his shirt tail. “Coffee this morning. Haha. Can’t go anywhere with a dirty Spoon no can I? Haha.”

He was going with me, as naturally as someone hopping on the backseat of a two-seater bike.

I continued, “This Spot is, oh my god, unbelievable...”

I closed my eyes.

Or was it, that I opened them?

Chapter 53

Mother

As a Traveler, you are able to go places where very, very few- sometimes no one else- is able to go.

As I sit here typing these notes to you, I am in a place, and make no mistake- this is a REAL place- that is so exclusive that not a handful of people have been here. I've been admitted to a very exclusive oasis.

It's not an imaginary place in the least. My senses are filled with sounds, aromas, sights, and feelings. This is concrete in every sense.

Under my feet is a winding stone path, lit periodically by small incandescent mushrooms guiding my serpentine way through a garden.

In one direction, the full moon is seen half hiding behind a latticework of gigantic glistening diamonds, its light playing on the tops of the trees. In the other hemisphere in the far distance blinks a winking star, an unusual steady wink pause wink pause wink pause wink.

Oversized broad palm leaves gently bounce in the breeze and look like silhouettes of owls bobbing in the moonlight.

There is a fog that has settled just beyond the diamond canopy, a comforting haze that safely blankets me from the rest of this world.

There is no sound except the steady wash of a constant shooooooooosh, like thirty giant fans circulating an artificial yet gentle steady wind. The sound is completely pervasive and omnipresent in all the corners of this place, yet oddly humble and non-intrusive to whatever I deem my purpose here.

I have Traveled here, minutes from my living room couch.

There are benches and wooden slatted staircases here in this comfortable Swiss Family Robinson conclave, but without the interruption of any other persons or howling native primates whatsoever. And no bugs biting me. It is better than paradise.

Then suddenly in the dim moonlight and darkness I hear a voice address me.

“Hey, there is this little old lady who’s looking for you. I think it’s your mom.”

It seems as though your mother can find you anywhere.

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