



A Quiet Place

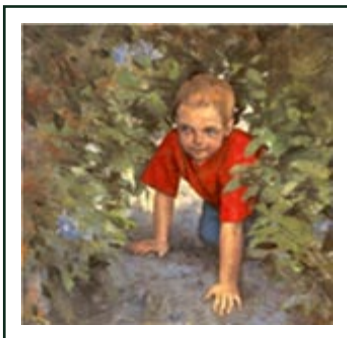
Sometimes a person needs a quiet place.

A place to rest your ears from bells ringing and whistles shrieking and grown-ups talking and engines roaring and horns blaring and grown-ups talking and radios playing and grown-ups...

Well, even grown-ups need a quiet place sometimes.

But it can be hard to find one. You have to know where to look.

You could look under a bush, a lilac bush, in your own backyard. When you crawl underneath it, all the sounds of the world seem soft and far away. And you can be a pirate, finding buried treasure on a desert island.



A bush could be your quiet place.

Until someone calls you to clean your room. Then...

You could look in the woods. You might find an old stump for a chair or a mossy log for a couch in a green mansion of shadows and sunbeams. It's not really quiet, of course.

Blue jays scream warnings, and wind sings in the leaves. But it feels quiet. And you can be a timber wolf, the gray ghost of the forest.

The woods could be your quiet place.

But if the woods are too dark and deep...



You could look by the sea on a beach in the early morning fog. Your footprints are the first of the day.

The waves are roaring, and the gulls are crying, but it doesn't seem noisy. And you can just be an explorer discovering a lost continent.



The beach could be your quiet place.

But if the beach is not your cup of tea...

You could look in the desert, where Old Man Saguaro reaches for the sky, and far-off thunderheads bloom like sky-flowers over the mesas. A cactus wren drops by for a visit, while a horned toad blinks in the sun. And you can be a Pony Express rider galloping through the Old West.

The desert could be your quiet place.

But if the desert is a bit too dry...



You could sit by a pond. A heron by the shore stands still as a tree branch, and the water is so calm it looks like a mirror. Then a frog plops from a lily pad, and your face begins to wiggle. And you can be the world's greatest fisherman reeling in a monster catch.



A pond could be your quiet place.

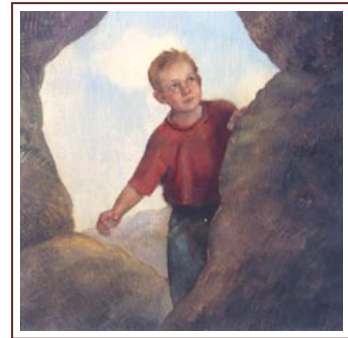
But if the fish aren't biting...

You could look in a cavern where every footstep echoes, and the slow drip, drip of water builds new rocks that hang like icicles or stand like sculptures; where days and nights and weeks and years are all the same.

And you can be a cave dweller in the lair of the saber-toothed tiger.

A cave could be your quiet place.

But if a cave is too cold and damp...



You could climb to the top of a hill where clouds float by like ships or alligators or elephants. On a hilltop you can see a long way and think long thoughts about *How* and *What* and *Why*.

And you can be a mountain climber on the top of the world.



A hilltop could be your quiet place.

But if your legs are too tired for climbing...

You could wait for a snowy day and lie down in a snowdrift.

All around you the falling snow whispers, “S-H-H-H-H,” and wraps the world in silence.

If you listen closely you can almost hear it breathing. You breathe softly too, pretending to be a polar bear sleeping in a land where the snowy silence never ends.

A snowdrift could be your quiet place.

But if it's too warm for snowdrifts...



You could visit a museum where brass tigers and bronze lions stand silent guard over fabulous treasures. Every painting is a magic window that your own imagination can open wide and climb through.

And you can be an artist admiring your own masterpiece.



A museum could be your quiet place.

But if the museum is closed for renovation...

You could go to a secret corner of the library where the only people talking are between the covers of books. They speak so softly you can only hear them in your head as you read about forests and oceans and deserts and caverns and museums and a thousand other things.

A library could be your quiet place.

But if the library isn't open yet...



You could come home and clean your room and read your own books and think your own thoughts and feel your own feelings and discover the very best quiet place of all – the one that's always there, no matter where you go or where you stay –



– the one inside you!

Douglas Wood
A Quiet Place
New York, Simon & Schuster, 2002