

The Armchair Traveller by Paul Arinaga

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“Ugh” groaned Jacques.

He had been looking forward so much to summer vacation, but now that it was here he felt bored. His mom and dad had suggested he go to summer camp but he’d refused.

“I’ll be fine,” he’d said, “now I can do all the things I didn’t have time to do during the school year.”

At first Jacques had done some of his hobbies: drawing pictures, and making model airplanes.

But pretty soon, he got bored and started to miss his friends. They’d all gone away to summer camp or on vacation with their parents.

Jacques was home alone.

For a few days he watched TV but the soap operas during the day were kind of silly and the cartoons seemed all the same after a while. He felt even more bored after watching a couple of them.

The day before, he’d played computer games all day but wound up with a headache and sore eyes.

One afternoon, Jacques was feeling sleepy after lunch so he lay down in the living room. He glanced over and noticed a few of his parents’ magazines.

Amidst the pile of usual grown-up magazines like *Time*, *Business Week* and *The Economist*, one caught Jacques’ eye. It was *Adventure* magazine.

He started flipping through the pages. There were pictures of people kayaking in northern Canada, dog sledding in Lapland and trekking around Lake Baikal in Siberia. Jacques turned a page and there was a picture of his very own dad exploring a glacier.

It was a hot day and Jacques had had a big lunch so he started to feel pretty sleepy. Soon he dozed off. Or at least he *thought* he had dozed off. He wasn't quite sure because he was in the twilight zone between being awake and being asleep.

Suddenly Jacques felt cold. It was freezing even though it was a hot, summer day.

"Wait a minute...gulp!" Jacques was shocked to discover that he was on the face of a glacier. His father was there, too, telling him how to climb up using his ice pick.

"Oofff!" Jacques struggled up the steep ice, trying not to look down. "I hope this ice doesn't break off!" he thought to himself.

Suddenly he slipped. "Whoa-oh-oh-oh!" he screamed as he went sliding down the slippery glacier. But fortunately before he could get really scared the rope caught him. He felt a giant tug on his harness, but he stopped falling.

Jacques' heart was beating a mile a minute and he was sweating heavily despite the cold.

His dad came back down to him and helped him back up. They continued climbing and after about an hour had reached the top.

What a view. Jacques had never seen anything like it. Snowcapped mountains all around and far away a glimmer of blue sea.

"Ding-dong"

Someone was at the door. Oops...all of a sudden Jacques found himself back home on a hot summer day. He got up and went to open the door. It was the mailman. He had a package to deliver. Besides the package, there were a bunch of letters and magazines for his parents.

One of them caught Jacques' eye. It was an archeology magazine. On the front cover was a picture of crumbling stone ruins on top of spiky mountains. There was a story in the magazine about a place called "Machu Picchu". They called it "the lost city of the Incas".

Jacques lay back down and started to flip through the pages of this new magazine. "This is certainly better than watching soap operas, or even cartoons," he thought to himself.

The midday sun was reaching its highest point now and the heat was scorching.

Jacques got a glass of lemonade and settled into his dad's favorite armchair.

Pretty soon his eyes got a glazed look and his head drooped. Again Jacques felt like he was asleep but he wasn't quite sure. It seemed like he was still in the living room sitting in his dad's favorite chair, yet all around him were steep cliff faces.

A cool wind blew pleasantly in Jacques face, instantly blowing the summer heat away and cooling him down. This place was totally cool. There were steep stairs and high walls, terraces stretching up into the sky like the bleachers of a sports stadium except that they were made of stone. And all around were enormous mountains, some spiky and some rounded. For a moment Jacques wondered whether he had died and gone to heaven.

Then he wondered where all the people were. This place was totally deserted. It looked like some people had lived there a long time ago.

Presently it started raining. "Ooops!" Jacques was back home again. He got up and ran to the bathroom. "Just in time!" he thought to himself.

"Wow, that was a weird dream...or was it a dream even" Jacques wondered.

"It seems like every time I doze off I end up somewhere exciting," he said to himself. "I wonder if I can choose my next destination?"

Jacques had some more lemonade and stretched out in his dad's reclining chair again. "This time I'm going to go somewhere more relaxing" he thought to himself. He picked up a copy of *Travel & Leisure* magazine. There was an article about vacationing in Hawaii.

"Perfect!" Jacques said to himself. "I'll just lie around on the beach and get a suntan."

He layback in his dad's chair again and closed his eyes.

"Waaaaauuuu gggghhhhhh!"

He was riding a surfboard on a 12 foot wave at the Pipeline on Oahu's famed north shore.

"Oh, boy...I guess I need to choose my destinations a bit more carefully," he thought to himself as he dropped down the face of the powerful wave and entered its cavernous tube.

After a whole afternoon of armchair traveling, Jacques had been all over the world, on land, in the air, under the ground and under the sea. He'd even been to outer space.

He was completely exhilarated...but also ready for a few boring soap operas and a good nap.

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