



**An Epic Poem in Honor of the Magic Tara Pants  
By Naomi McDougall Jones  
On the occasion of passing them to a new Tara (in absentia)**

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It's been almost a year now since first I was swept  
As if off to Narnia, on a cruise ship we left;  
Away from the world of mere mortals we drove  
Into the singular paradise of the Belizean Grove

Impossible to translate to anyone not present  
The caliber... nay quality... nay kindness of the tenants.  
All female, all impressive, all peculiar in extraordinary ways  
I knew very soon that now I would yearn to know them the rest  
Of my days.

Then Edie sang "Cruising"; then we danced 'til the dawn;  
Then our minds were exploded by the panels we spoke on;  
The pajama parties happened; tears and love were exchanged;  
Susan said, "Go deep and fast," far and wide the topics ranged.

An outsider all my life, as so many there said they'd been,  
Here at long last was a group, that I badly wanted in.  
We dined and drank (and drank and drank), gamboling 'neath a glitt'ring sky  
I was given these pants, a magical token, and my life gained  
A new kind of  
Why.

For after we disembarked and flew back from whence we'd come  
Our time in the Grove was hard to believe; it was easy to feel  
somewhat glum;  
For how to explain that my mind and my heart and my dreams had  
Swung open?  
But they had. I was different. I couldn't return. A new time in my life  
Had just broken.

And after the days and the months had gone by and I lacked like an ache for the Grove.  
In my drawer I could find, on my legs I could wear, silly pants, but  
In truth: a treasure trove.  
Slip them on and the memories and magic flood back, a wonderful  
Secret you've got  
(And through some form of witchcraft, I swear that they do, also, somehow  
Make your booty look damn hot).

So although I'm at Neverville and not there in Cuba to pass sacred  
Pants on their way  
I'm sending this poem, an additional charm, bringing sorcery all year and  
Today  
You're in the Grove now, baby, and, although I am new, I can tell  
You your life has just changed.  
Signed, with love, your new sister. Now all I can say is get ready  
For something wonderful (and strange).

Enjoy them :)  
With love,  
Naomi

**Belizean Grove - Cuba 2017**  
**By Leigh Winter Martin (Nyomi)**

I volunteered for this poem  
As my rookie hazing  
No shortage of material  
You all are amazing

Like the woman doctor  
Painting that highway line  
We trailblaze  
Not content to ride the pine

We immersed ourselves in  
Healthcare, art, and education  
Economics, gender, and  
Reef deterioration

For innovation, scarcity is the  
Mother of invention  
For human trafficking, education  
The only prevention

So here we traffic in ideas  
Here we traffic in love  
Here we stop to dance  
Under the stars above

Then with minds refreshed  
And pedicures glossy  
We rode on buses hearing  
Jokes about a...*posse*<sup>1</sup>

From restored paladars  
To stalling 50s cars  
We danced in the rain  
And. Shut. Down. Each. Bar!  
(we drank our fair share  
of this vitamin R)

We were told that we'd learn  
But not necessarily understand  
To accept the contradictions  
Of this rapidly changing land

Es complicado  
Es complicado  
Pero no es complicado  
Cuando tenemos machango!<sup>2</sup>

To all you Stressed-out Ladies  
Unwinding Together  
I'm honored to call you S.L.U.T.s<sup>3</sup>  
My sisters forever.

Long Live the Grove!  
Long Live Cuba!

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<sup>1</sup> Ask Grace to tell you this one

<sup>2</sup> Poet's interpretation of the celebratory word Canela de Cuba was singing; dancing mandatory

<sup>3</sup> © Susan Stautberg, opening remarks