

The Nexus Ring by Maureen Bush

Booktalk by Rhonda Wills

How many people have traveled out to British Columbia on holidays with their Mom and Dad? Did you ever go on a ferry across to Vancouver Island? Did you ever play little games in the car to help pass the time as you travel?

This book, called the Nexus Ring, is about an adventure that two children have as they travel back from Vancouver Island to their home in Calgary. Their Mom begins a game of make-believe where they have to find a talisman to allow them to reach and pass beyond each point on their trip. Josh is a little reluctant but joins in to keep his younger sister happy. When Maddy finds an interesting stone ring on the ferry to use as their first talisman, the game suddenly becomes very real. They realize that something is unusual when they notice a sinister looking man watching them in the gift shop on the ferry. Later, after traveling on the road and stopping at a rest stop, they become even more alarmed. They lose their Mom and Dad in a crowd of people and then watch helplessly as their van pulls out of the parking lot without them.

(read from page 27 and 27)

Maddy and I stood in the road, stunned. How could they leave without us? Maddy started to cry. I hugged her, then stiffened. "Maddy," I whispered. "Look. That man. He's here."

The man from the gift shop stood in the shadows by the boardwalk. He was grinning, a look much uglier than his scowl. We stared at him.

"You're parents won't be back," he announced. "Unless you give me that ring. Then I'll bring them back."

I glanced down at the ring on Maddy's finger. I couldn't believe what he'd said. How could he make people go away and then bring them back?

Maddy yelled at him, "They'll come back. They won't leave us!"

"They just did! They think you are sitting in the back seats. I put two Shadows there. They look just like you, only they're a lot quieter."

"Shadows?" My voice squeaked. "What are you talking about?"

"Little pretend children. Very quiet. No trouble at all. And Shadows make people very uneasy, so no one looks too closely. Your parents won't notice a thing."

Maddy slipped her hand into mine. I looked down at her; her eyes were huge and dark in her suddenly pale face. She whispered, "Josh, I'm scared. I want to go home."

The solution seems simple to Josh. Give the man the ring so that he will bring their parents back but Maddy refuses. There is something about the man that makes her think that giving up the ring would be the worst thing they could do. They have to get away from him. When the tall woman from the gift shop appears before them, she magically reveals the man's true identity.

"the man's face shifted. His nose grew larger and lumpier, his ears bigger, his skin rough. His body shifted too, becoming squat and lumpy. He looked meaner than ever... [Josh's] stomach turned up on itself. Definitely a troll." (p. 29)

They quickly accept the woman, Aleena's, offer to help yet Josh is uneasy as he realizes she is not quite human as well. She quickly leads them off the public pathways into the forest. The sound of the troll is following closely behind them. When she asks to touch the ring, mist appears between two cedars and then turns to a white glow. A hole appears in the middle like a doorway. Aleena goes through and pauses to beckon them forward. Fear surges through Josh as he hears the roaring of the troll getting closer and he pushes Maddy into the opening and follows her through. Where is this place that they find themselves? Have they escaped from the furious troll? Who is Aleena and why is she helping them? **IS** she helping them? To find out more about Josh and Maddy's adventure you will have to read *The Nexus Ring* by Maureen Bush.