A Night in the Potter’s Shed - An Already Here Adventure

A choose-your-own-adventure practice book

An original temple welcome, complete practices, and choices you can follow on paper.

Begin at The temple garden on page 2.

Scenes are shuffled. Follow the page numbers at the end of each scene. You can stop or change direction whenever you choose.

The temple garden

An original fictional welcome

You step through a small gate into a well-kept garden. Beyond it stands a small but beautiful Theravada Buddhist temple. Inside, one man sits in meditation. His face resembles Siddhartha as you have seen him imagined in art. Incense is burning. Three meditation pads lie before him.

You may sit or move on. If you sit, he opens his eyes, smiles, and greets you: “Welcome. The path is wide. You may begin with your own ordinary experience, and see what it reveals.”

Your adventure

A Night in the Potter’s Shed. A traveler shares shelter with a teacher he does not recognize. The source includes an unexpected death.

“Try each invitation gently. You can question it, change direction, rest, or leave. Keep what helps and let the rest go. Ancient wisdom is an invitation to investigate, not a promise of an experience.”

Reading this book

Start using either choice below. After that, follow the page numbers rather than reading straight through. Scenes are deliberately shuffled; one scene may run over several pages. Choices appear at its end. In a PDF reader you can also click them. Keep a finger or bookmark at your current page when you pause. Two optional meetings with the man lead back to the exact scene you left.

Story and practice

The source story follows its recorded direction. Modern practice pauses and the temple framing are editorial additions, not episodes from the original story.

Detailed adaptation notes and gaps are available at the back of the book, so the telling can unfold without stopping for every editorial explanation.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Sit, listen, and begin - turn to page 26.

Move on and enter the adventure - turn to page 26.

Optional: read how this telling was made - turn to page 34.

Practice pause · Recognize a thought

A wise person who has uprooted envy, greed, dishonesty, and hatred is worthy of respect.

Pukkusati is listening before he knows the speaker's identity. Try attending to one actual detail without deciding in advance what it must mean.

The man leaves the story's image with you rather than explaining it again. This editorial addition is a chance to meet an everyday version of the question. A small, safe example will do.

Practice pause

Recognize a thought

1. Notice

Sit comfortably and notice a thought when you become aware of one.

2. Distinguish

Is it a plan, a wish, an objection, or another kind of thinking?

3. Watch

Can you notice the thinking as well as its subject? There is no need to find a separate observer.

4. Release

Let attention return to the room. Nothing must be silenced.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter's shed

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 13.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Practice pause · Ease without a review

Someone who seeks pleasure by causing others pain becomes caught in hatred and cannot escape it that way.

Let the story's care accompany a small present task. Nothing in this pause asks you to reproduce its ending or identify your own stage of development.

For this last editorial addition, the man leaves room to finish. You can set down the exercise along with the book. An unfinished question may remain useful without being carried as an obligation.

Practice pause

Ease without a review

1. Notice

If an easy moment is present, notice it. If not, simply sit comfortably.

2. Distinguish

Distinguish ease from excitement about being calm or checking whether it will last.

3. Watch

Let that extra evaluation rest briefly. Notice what remains.

4. Release

Look around and continue your day. There is no state to preserve.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Mindfulness of breathing

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 31.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

The garden does not hurry

An optional meeting - original fiction

You find the man beside the temple garden. He makes room for you to sit. This meeting is a pause in the adventure, not a required practice.

The man speaks

“An unfamiliar companion may have something worth hearing. Set aside the wish to classify the person long enough to listen carefully to what is being said.”

He smiles. “When you are ready, return to where you left the story.”

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Return to “Shared shelter” - turn to page 26.

Practice pause · Before the reply

A quiet mind can become another possession to protect. Approach this practice as something you can try and set down, not a state you must sustain.

The next part can wait while the lesson meets an ordinary choice. This editorial addition stays close to a real, manageable situation rather than asking you to reproduce the events or achievements in the telling.

A modern practice pause

Before the reply

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

No message needs to be sent. Keep boundaries and necessary protective action.

1. Invitation 1

Use a low-stakes message, real or imagined. Keep your hands comfortably supported. Leave urgent or unsafe situations to practical care.

2. Invitation 2

Before replying, ask whether the words are truthful and whether sending them is likely to harm you, the other person, or both. Bodily tension is information, not the answer to that question.

3. Invitation 3

Draft one accurate sentence without an accusation about a motive you cannot know. If it would cause avoidable harm, revise it or choose not to send it.

4. Invitation 4

If you speak or send, remain attentive to the effects. Stop or correct course when harm becomes apparent. You can also leave the draft unsent.

After the practice

What did you choose, and what still needs checking?

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 23.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Practice pause · Steady care

The unexpected death belongs to the ancient account. If it brings up grief or unease, you can stop here and seek ordinary company or support.

The story is nearing its ending, but your day has its own pace. This editorial addition asks whether anything small can travel with you into that day. It need not resemble the result reported in the account.

Practice pause

Steady care

1. Notice

Think of someone you care about in an ordinary situation.

2. Distinguish

Distinguish wishing them well from needing a particular outcome.

3. Watch

Can care and steadiness be present together, even briefly?

4. Release

Keep appropriate responsibilities and boundaries. Release only the extra struggle you can leave.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Cultivating care and steadiness

The visitor in the potter's shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 6.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Practice pause · Recognition and intention

The telling can wait while you notice a familiar assumption. This exercise is an editorial pause, not a reconstruction of Pukkusati's meditation.

Before the telling moves on, there is another way to approach this moment. As an editorial addition, the exercise belongs to your present life. You can adapt it or let it pass without changing anyone's part in the old story.

Practice pause

Recognition and intention

1. Notice

Look at an ordinary object such as a cup.

2. Distinguish

Distinguish its visible appearance, recognizing “cup,” and any intention to pick it up.

3. Watch

Is every part equally apparent? Does recognizing it immediately lead to doing something?

4. Release

Leave the cup alone or use it. Finish with ordinary activity.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

How elaboration gathers

The fourfold round

The visitor in the potter's shed

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 25.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Practice pause · Physical qualities

Watch your speech, steady your mind, and do no harm through your actions.

The teaching distinguishes qualities that are often bundled into a single thing called me. Explore a modest bodily detail while keeping contact with ordinary surroundings.

Here the man allows a longer silence. This editorial addition can be tried without producing the lesson's supposed correct feeling. Notice what the invitation actually does, and stop if ordinary care asks for something else.

Practice pause

Physical qualities

1. Notice

Notice ordinary resistance at a contact point, temperature, and movement with breathing.

2. Distinguish

If already apparent, include moisture such as saliva. Fluidity and cohesion may be something you infer rather than directly feel.

3. Watch

How much can these qualities describe? Where does a name or explanation enter?

4. Release

Let the categories go. Nothing needs to fit neatly.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Cultivating care and steadiness

The visitor in the potter's shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 28.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Practice pause · Knowing this position

Sharing shelter does not require knowing another person's full story. Consider an ordinary act of welcome that can coexist with sensible boundaries.

The telling remains open while you try another small invitation. This editorial addition does not ask you to decide what the characters should have felt. Let one ordinary experience of your own receive a little attention.

Practice pause

Knowing this position

1. Notice

Notice whether you are sitting, standing, walking, or lying down.

2. Distinguish

How do you know? Notice contact and position without adjusting them.

3. Watch

Stay with that ordinary knowledge briefly.

4. Release

Continue your activity; there is nothing to retain.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 22.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Carry only what helps

An optional meeting - original fiction

You find the man beside the temple garden. He makes room for you to sit. This meeting is a pause in the adventure, not a required practice.

The man speaks

“A story can end beyond what we would choose. You do not need to reproduce its ending to learn from its attention and care. Return to the life that can be tended today.”

He smiles. “When you are ready, return to where you left the story.”

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Return to “Practice pause · A place to sit” - turn to page 21.

Practice pause · A place to sit

Before anyone is recognized, space is offered. Let this modern pause begin with the support and room actually available where you are.

The man pauses before the next part of the telling. You can try this editorial addition in the room where you are, without imagining yourself inside the historical event. There is time to notice what the beginning has stirred.

Practice pause

A place to sit

1. Notice

Sit in a position that feels comfortable. Notice where your body meets the seat.

2. Invite

Notice two points of contact: perhaps a hip and a thigh, or your back and the chair. Compare pressure or texture. Use another supported position if sitting is unavailable.

3. Listen

Make one small comfortable adjustment, or remain still and shift attention between those points. What changed in the contact, and what stayed the same? No posture needs to be achieved.

4. Respond

Let your attention move outward while the support remains beneath you.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The visitor in the potter's shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 17.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - carry only what helps - turn to page 19.

The unknown teacher

After observing Pukkusati's careful conduct, the Buddha asks whom he follows. Pukkusati speaks warmly of Gotama, the teacher whose reputation led him to leave home. Where is this teacher now? In Savatthi, he believes. Would he recognize him if they met? No. He has never seen him.

The stranger does not turn the moment into a test of recognition. He offers a teaching and asks Pukkusati to listen closely. The night can continue on the strength of attention rather than identification. A person who might have been busy searching for the right face is given the chance to hear what he has been looking for.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 4.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Practice pause · Repair without disappearing

If giving up a small pleasure makes room for a greater one, a wise person lets the smaller pleasure go.

Recognition changes the conversation, but it does not remove practical needs. Return to a simple action that your day actually calls for.

The man has not asked for a report. This editorial addition lets you listen to the effects of a practice privately. Keep what is usable, and leave what has become unnecessary work.

Practice pause

Repair without disappearing

1. Notice

Recall a manageable recent interaction where your behavior caused a problem. Notice support beneath your body.

2. Invite

Name the specific action and its likely impact without explaining it away or declaring yourself a bad person.

3. Listen

Rehearse a repair: “I interrupted you. I am sorry. I want to hear the rest.” Let the words be plain.

4. Respond

Make the repair if appropriate and follow through. The other person does not owe immediate forgiveness or reassurance.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 33.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Examining experience

The teaching begins by taking apart the ordinary idea of a person. There are solid and fluid qualities, heat, movement, space, and awareness; there are the places where contact happens and the feelings and responses that follow. What seems so thoroughly one's own is examined as something dependent on conditions.

The lesson is not to despise a living body. It is to see whether grasping its changing qualities as a permanent possession can bring the security being asked of them. Pukkusati is led through the material with care. Even a refined, even state of mind is not made into the final thing to own. There is more to let go of than coarse agitation.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 15.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Shared shelter

When someone finds freedom through understanding, their thoughts, words, and actions become peaceful.

A traveler asks a potter named Bhaggava for shelter for one night. The potter has room in his shed, but another wanderer is already staying there; permission must be asked of him too. The traveler is the Buddha. The other man, Pukkusati, has left his former life because of the Buddha's reputation, although he has never met him.

Pukkusati welcomes the stranger as a fellow practitioner. There is space enough, he says in effect. The two settle in the shed and spend much of the night sitting quietly. The account lets the reader know something the host does not. The person he admires from a distance is already sharing the shelter, without announcing a title.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 20.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - the garden does not hurry - turn to page 8.

You can leave the story here

Reading, resting, and living the rest of your day are also available. There is no obligation to finish this retelling or return to it.

The man makes no attempt to draw you back into the telling. A story can wait while a person meets the needs of a real day. Leave its characters where they are for now. If you return, the page can be opened without an apology for the time spent elsewhere.

Notice, without grading

Your previous place remains available in your account when signed in, or in this browser for guests when storage works.

An ordinary pause

You may close the book, explore ordinary life, and return to this page whenever you choose. Leaving can be part of walking the path.

Leaving the path

The man in the temple offers a quiet farewell. You can return to ordinary life now, or return to your bookmarked page another day. This pause is not a completed journey.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

Practice pause · One moment, five questions

A feeling can be present without becoming an instruction. Let the next practice ask what is experienced before asking what must be done about it.

The turn in the story need not become a demand on you. This editorial addition offers another modest experiment. Something useful may appear; nothing in the characters' lives depends on whether it does.

Practice pause

One moment, five questions

1. Notice

Choose a manageable moment, such as waiting for a reply.

2. Distinguish

Ask: what bodily experience, feeling tone, recognition, and intention are present? What is currently being consciously experienced?

3. Watch

Notice which distinctions are clear. Conscious experience here means seeing, hearing, or knowing this event, not a hidden observer.

4. Release

Set the categories down. You need not find five separate objects.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

The fourfold round

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 30.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Recognition and acknowledgment

The teacher compares a clear, workable mind with refined gold that could be shaped into many objects. In the account, the practitioner recognizes the possibility of directing such a mind toward very refined experiences, then understands that these too would be constructed and dependent. He does not settle the search by building a more beautiful place to cling.

The teaching turns toward freedom from the habit of making an identity out of experience. Pukkusati realizes who has been speaking. He asks forgiveness for addressing the Buddha as a familiar equal and asks to enter the community formally. The reply brings the extraordinary night back to an ordinary requirement: he needs a bowl and robes.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 9.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

Let the story rest

The retelling and its modern practice pauses can end here. You can read the full wisdom reference, return to ordinary activity, or explore another adventure.

The man closes the telling without turning its reported ending into a result you are expected to claim. The people in the old account have their own training and consequences. What you can carry is a question or an intention that meets your own ordinary life with a little more care.

Notice, without grading

Participation in these pauses does not establish the attainments described in the source.

Back at the temple

You return through the well-kept garden to the small temple. Incense drifts past the three meditation pads. The man opens his eyes, smiles, and welcomes you back.

The man speaks

You shared a story of shelter, listening and an unexpected ending. What you can carry forward is the care and attention available in this day.

“You are welcome to walk another adventure, or return to ordinary life. There is nothing you need to prove before you go.”

An ending

To return to ordinary life, close the book here. Finishing marks participation, not an attainment.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Sit in the temple and begin a fresh visit - turn to page 2.

An unexpected ending

Pukkusati leaves to obtain what is needed. Before he can return, a cow kills him. The suddenness is part of the source, and it is not softened into a different ending here. Later, the Buddha explains that the man who listened in the potter's shed had reached a deep stage of the path and would not return to this world.

A modern practice book cannot verify that state in its reader. What the telling can preserve is the meeting itself: hospitality before recognition, careful listening before a label, a teaching that does not stop at owning a quiet mind. Let the shed grow quiet again. The life available to care for is the one in which you are reading now.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 11.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 27.

How this telling was made

Original telling and modern practice

The temple man, present-day settings, connective descriptions, and reader choices are original literary framing. Historical stories retain their recorded direction. Dialogue is modern paraphrase, not a claimed historical quotation. Practice pauses are modern invitations; reading an outcome does not establish that outcome in the reader.

About the adaptation

An original short retelling of the cited discourse episode. Historical narrative is distinguished from contemporary practice invitations; no invented choices change the recorded events.

Story, practice, and the full source

The source’s detailed analysis and reported spiritual destination are abbreviated. These modern observations do not complete that teaching or establish its attainments. The death is part of the narrative, not an invitation to seek danger or a claim that bodily safety is unimportant.

A place to sit

supporting. A place to sit: Attending to ordinary physical experience can prepare bodily mindfulness. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

Knowing this position

adaptation. Knowing this position: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: knowing the body. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

Recognize a thought

adaptation. Recognize a thought: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing and not feeding unhelpful thought. Regulation or preference alone does not establish ethical skillfulness; all four efforts and consequences need consideration.

Recognition and intention

adaptation. Recognition and intention: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: distinguishing experiential categories. Changes in viewpoint, naming, or boundaries do not establish not-self, nonduality, or release.

Physical qualities

adaptation. Physical qualities: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: knowing the body. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

One moment, five questions

adaptation. One moment, five questions: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: distinguishing experiential categories. Changes in viewpoint, naming, or boundaries do not establish not-self, nonduality, or release.

Before the reply

adaptation. Before the reply: New practice addressing: Conduct in daily life. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

Repair without disappearing

supporting. Repair without disappearing: Pausing and considering a response can support truthful, non-harming speech. Assertiveness or bodily confidence alone does not fulfill right speech; assess truthfulness, harm, and effects.

Steady care

adaptation. Steady care: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: cultivating care. Modern imagery, permission, and interpersonal techniques are adaptations; the full cultivation is not covered.

Ease without a review

adaptation. Ease without a review: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: settling body and mind. Natural breathing and temporary ease do not cover the sixteen trainings or establish deep collectedness.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Establishing mindfulness

How elaboration gathers

Mindfulness of breathing

Reflection on action

The fourfold round

The visitor in the potter’s shed

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Return to the temple garden - turn to page 2.