



September Affair Rolls Around Again

by Jannice Niles Simmons

This annual event, held on September 15 at the home of Derry Harry, reminded me somehow of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in Alice in Wonderland.

I arrived earlier than usual so as not to miss the anticipated presentation on an interesting topic. I found a table set out at the front of the house but no-one was seated there as yet. However, I noticed that the other tables, all set out under the house, were already taken by the "earlier birds" who were talking and laughing in subdued tones.

After greetings and a welcome hug from our younger hostesses, I squeezed into a vacant seat while acknowledging the greetings of friends seated at the other tables. Someone remarked, "I wonder if we are going to have a talk first." But the reply was lost as our charming hostesses appeared with trays of tinkling glasses of beverages, asking, "Would you like to have five finger, soursop, guava or shandy? You could also have white wine or red wine." While this service continued, we were presented with plates of good old Guyanese fare such as chicken salad, sandwiches and cupcakes.

There was a hustle and a bustle as a large group of ladies arrived. They were quickly settled around the vacant table in front. This was accompanied by whispers of "Oh, that's what the table was for." None of us had chosen to sit at the first table, gravitating naturally to the tables shielded from the sun.

After we had savoured the refreshments, the buzz started again. Everyone was trying to guess what surprise was in store for us.

We saw gift bags of all sizes being brought out of their secret hiding place and put on a large table. Then the announcement was made. "You are going to play bingo this year! The prizes are in these nice bags and you'll have to win one."

Before starting to play, we honoured all ladies whose 80th birthdays occurred during this year as well as those who were celebrating their 75th birthdays. Next, we observed a moment of silence and reflection for those who had graduated from the Senior Class and gone on to higher service during 2012.

Then the games. There were excited shouts of: "Bingo! Come and check!" But winners' words were accepted as true. There were also groans about not winning, until some of the groaners became winners themselves. We played bingo until all prizes were duly won.

Members of the Senior Class departed the venue with feelings of contentment and, perhaps, looking forward to being there next year.



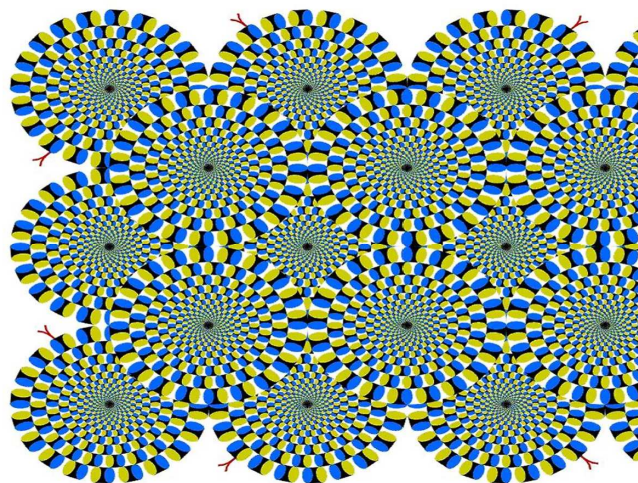
Life's Lesson: The Obstacle in Our Path

In ancient times, a King had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the King for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the King indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many of us never understand!

Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

Optical Illusions



Take a look at the picture to the left. It is not animated. Your eyes are making it move. To test this, stare at one spot for a couple seconds and everything will stop moving. Or look at the black centre of each circle and it will stop moving. But move your eyes to the next black centre and the previous one will move after you take your eyes away from it.... Weird!

How to Comfort Someone who is Grieving

It is sometimes difficult to know what to say to a bereaved person. If you find yourself tongue-tied or uncertain of what to do in the face of someone's loss, here are some steps you might try.

- ◆ **Name names.** Don't be afraid to mention the deceased. It won't make your friend any sadder, although it may prompt tears. It's terrible to feel that someone you love must forever be expunged from memory and conversation.
- ◆ **Offer hope.** People who have gone through grieving often remember that it is the person who offered reassuring hope, the certainty that things will get better, who helped them make the gradual passage from pain to a renewed sense of life.
- ◆ **Make phone calls.** Call to express your sympathy. Try to steer clear of such phrases as "It's God's will" or "It's for the best" unless the bereaved person says this first. Your friend or relative may need you even more after the first few weeks and months, when other people may stop calling.
- ◆ **Write a note.** If you had a relationship with the deceased, try to include a warm, caring, or funny anecdote that shows how important to you he/she was. If you didn't know the deceased, offer your sympathy and assure the bereaved that he/she is in your thoughts or prayers.
- ◆ **Help out.** Be specific when offering help. Volunteer to shop or do laundry, bring dinner, pass on information about funeral arrangements or answer the phone. Pitch in to clean up the kitchen. A lawyer might volunteer to help with the estate.
- ◆ **Listen well instead of advising.** A sympathetic ear is a wonderful thing. A friend who listens even when the same story is told with little variation is even better. Often, people work through grief and trauma by telling their story over and over. Unless you are asked for your advice, don't be quick to offer it.
- ◆ **Keep your promises.** If you offer to do anything, follow through. This is especially important where promises to children are involved. Losing a loved one is abandonment enough.

