

August 2008 e -Ninepatch

Ninepatch ***Stitch - by - Stitch***

W - e - C - r - e - a - t - e - O - u - r - L - i - v - e - s -

FROM THE EDITOR: Following is the next section of my 2007 experience, BUS RIDE. From last month: ...Soon four more blue- uniformed officers stood on the BP's drive talking. *What's going on?*

HAPPY THOUGHTS

Stunned by the sirens and police presence, I sat dumbly and listened to the bus idle. Kathy leaned toward the side window and no one around me spoke. Minutes ticked by. No shots came from the BP store. The drive remained empty. *What's going on in there?*

About fifteen minutes later, two officers sauntered down the drive, swung into their car, and turned out of the empty lot. Next came two more blue uniforms. Following them walked the last two, and between them, White T-shirt. Hands behind his back, he was still singing. The second set of officers got into their vehicle, and motored off. Finally, the last pair loaded their man into the back seat, then stepped into their white and green car and departed.

At last our blond driver appeared. Straight-faced, he entered the bus. Seeing him, people in the back began to cheer and we all clapped. He stood in the aisle, smiling and nodding. When the applause ended he said, "I'm going to ask volunteers to fill out reports of this incident. Please raise your hand if you are willing to do this."

Kathy's hand shot up, "I will!"

As he passed up the aisle, she took a three by five inch paper he tore from a pad. We bent over her page. On one side was a map of the coach's interior with directions, "Please circle your seat." She turned it over. The reverse was blank except for directions, "Please write what you know of the incident."

She looked at me, "What shall I write?"

I shrugged. Besides the fact I was fuzzily operating on two or three hours of sleep I had not seen or heard anything except the yelled complaints.

Later I would overhear bits about the White T-shirt incident,

"He wore a plastic medical patient's band on one wrist..."

"... released from a mental hospital..."

"...drugs..."

I closed my eyes awhile and when I opened them, the billboards began to mention "Cincinnati." I sighed. *Too late for me...* I shook my head, reminding myself, *It's out of my hands.* I turned my thoughts from my missed connection to Detroit. The situation was out of my control. Instead, I brought to mind the first time I visited the city of seven hills.

I was in Kindergarten. All day I had sat wedged between Mother and Daddy in the back seat of Grandpa and Grandma's Buick that had three pedals on the floor for driving.

Daddy had been born in Cin-cin-nat-ti. Grandma grew up there and her sister, Therese, still lived near the top of one of the hills. *(Continued on the next page.)*

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The car's engine roared as it climbed that hill. Finally at the top, Grandpa parked by the side of the last house on the street. "Here we are," he said, and pulled the extra brake with his hand. "Skreet!"

When I got out, I didn't see the house at first. Standing next to Daddy on the sidewalk, I frowned when I saw its roof right by Daddy's head. He was as high as the house!

A black pointed fence ran along the side walk. Squatting down, I peered through black posts and saw the front door was way down below. While I stared at the strange house in-the-side-of-a- hill, I saw Grandma and Grandpa moving down a set of steps.

"Frank!" Mother called us over. It was my turn to climb down the stone stairs.

"Careful, Liebchen!" Grandma cautioned from the bottom, "Hold the rail." I reached up and put both hands on the cold black railing. The steps were steep. I wanted to sit and scoot down on my bottom, but I was wearing my good dress. I stepped carefully: right foot down, left down to meet it, then right foot down again and left to meet it. I let out a sigh when I got down to Grandma's arms at the bottom.

A walk edged a patch of grass and led to the porch where Grandpa was already at the door. A woman pushed past him and came toward Grandma with her arms out.

"Therese!" Grandma cried. They hugged and hugged. Then Grandma turned to pull her white lace handkerchief from her black pocketbook and wiped tears from behind her glasses. After that, she walked to the porch arm in arm with her sister. Mother, Daddy and I followed her through the front door.

Inside, Daddy smiled and nodded at everyone. One man leaned over to me and said, "So this is little Frankie!"

I shuffled my feet and looked at the floor. I didn't know what to say. Mother called me, "Tootsie." Daddy called me "Junior" and Grandma called me, "Liebchen." No one called me, "Frankie."

Everyone sat down in the front room and Grandma's sister brought in cups with saucers. She set them on the coffee table and turned to Mother, "Can Frances have some milk and cookies?"

Mother nodded and we followed her. After chewing cookies and swallowing milk that turned the side of the glass white, I whispered to Mother, "Can I go out?"

"MAY I go out..." She corrected me.

"May I?"

She put her hand out to me, and stood. We walked to the living room and she said to everyone, "Please excuse us."

Once outside, Mother still held my hand as we walked on the bright grass to its edge. Past a few trees there was no yard. My eyes opened wide when I glanced down at a drop off of raw dirt, rocks and bushes then house tops below. I squeezed Mother's hand.

"Let's stay by the porch," Mother suggested.

I nodded, happy to feel her warm hand curled around mine.

Recalling that happy visit in Cincinnati, I smiled to myself as the bus rolled up the Interstate toward the Ohio River. Thinking positive had helped.

Frances Fritzie

(AROUND THE FRAME is on the next page.)

-
A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E-
-
(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

Having 'puter problems, but want to let you know I'm thinking of you.

Still no charges from the tragic accident, we all wait. My daughter now has four plus months of sobriety at a long-term treatment center.

Hubby and I are on the road for one thing or another and have lots of company -- mostly family. We enjoy that and love each other dearly. We are also adjusting to each other.

Soon I'll start seeing a counselor for grief and also long-time issues. Life lessons never stop.

Much love,
Gail

Gail (July'08e) adds, "No time for reading lately. no time for anything but visitors and visiting."

*

Dear Frances,

My wife has been going through a rough time since I last wrote.

I don't remember if I mentioned that she has had an almost life long struggle with depression. That has been coupled with degenerative back problems and pain of varying intensity. She has also had trouble with panic attacks over the past three years or so, and during the past several weeks these have intensified. After a particularly alarming session, I phoned the doctor on call for her.

Bottom line, after her regular doctor changed her medications, I took some time off to be with my wife until she stabilized again. (Now, she is better, and I am back at work.)

Other than getting her on an even keel, the one positive thing this situation did was to give me time at home to work on my second book. I have it organized and most of the writings ready. Now I am tweaking it, adding a few more things to get it in shape for publishing.

Thank you so much for your concern about my e-mail silence. I'll get back to communicating with you more regularly before long.

Peace and Blessings,
Simon Stargazer III

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Simon Stargazer III (June '08) says, "I hope to have the book "out" by November this year. I think I will call it, Simon Sez, You Are The Expert On You!, Aphorisms For Living Your Life And other musings from Simon Stargazer III"

Hi Frances,

In a recent e-mail you said, "The hardest thing I do is tune into my inner guidance. One problem is I have followed society's dictates and wishes of others most of my life. To be able to choose for myself is strange, I have little idea how it might feel. That's one hindrance. Another is I look for guidance in ways I expect it to appear."

That touched me. It brought up the fact that when my husband died, I listened to our minister. He advised me not to go back to our Ohio home saying it didn't work to go back. Now, I feel each person is different and think I shouldn't have taken his advice. You're right, making my own decisions does feel strange. For the most part, I haven't trusted those inner feelings.

I've just started reading, A New Earth, Awakening to your Life's Purpose by Eckert Tolle for a new book study group that will begin shortly at my church. It sounds interesting.

Thanks for writing.

Hugs,

Dottie

Dottie (July '08) adds, "Listening to Caroline Myss tapes, I'm learning to watch for new kinds of guidance."

Dear Frances,

In your last letter you said, "I see you have many areas of your life that share a common thread: relationship."

Relationship? Oh yes. First, there's my relationship with my husband. I'd have to call it "troubled." My relationship with my daughter, Anita? I don't have one. I don't even know where she is! If I do see her, all she does is yell at me.

Guess I have more of a relationship with my dad who lives with us. We talk. He listens and we share thoughts and ideas. Maybe he understands me because he has known me since birth.

The short time I could afford counseling, my therapist told me I was a "caretaker." We were going to work on this, but my insurance ran out. I know I have to learn to concentrate on myself more.

I am trying to change. I am reading books and talking with other women. There's one friend at work who tells me I am stronger than I think I am. I am also trying to do more without help. If I can do a task myself, I do it.

I don't wait for my husband to help anymore.

I am also trying to fill my free time with things I like to do -- like reading. I like mysteries and books with a moral lesson. I usually go to the library's "inspirational section." I am also working on my thinking by rereading One Day at a Time and my other 12Step books.

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Thank you for your thoughts, prayers and letter. I do feel better. Thanks for listening, too.

May God bless you and keep you safe and happy.
Love and Prayers,
LindaSue (Continued on the next page.)

LindaSue (July '08) says, "Though my husband remains distant, I am trying to be caring and compassionate to him."

Dear Frances,

I get a kick out of the "Francesca" that another Ninepatcher calls you. I think it sort of fits.

My husband and I came north for a couple of months this summer. It's been chilly compared to Florida and I am still adjusting to the change. But weather is not the only alteration I have to face.

In Florida I was really get-ting down to "me": happy with me and liking me. I had joined the local art league, drawing again and thoroughly enjoying it.

Since last summer, my Higher Power seemed to be putting self-help books in my life, too. I read: Exuberance, The Passion for Life by Kay Redfield Jamison, Codependent No More, and Language of Letting Go by Melody Beattie. I followed those with Julia Cameron's The Artist's Way at Work and then The Artist's Way again. Maybe I mentioned one of those to my sister because she sent me, Cameron's The Vein of Gold. She also sent me, Boundaries, When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life. This "boundary" idea proved to be a new concept. Finally, I have to mention a must read, How Can I Get Through to You?, Closing the Intimacy Gap Between Men and Women by Terrance Real.

I've learned so much! The closest I can come to explaining what happened to me since last year is this: I was blind and now I see. I was always looking out-- outward at other people's needs and their reaction to me. I was DEFENSIVE, too -- big time.

Now I seem to be looking IN and I can see ME-- with love and comfort and understanding. All year I was healing my old ways and getting oriented to a new way of being.

Coming north this year has been a setback. The house is smaller so hubby and I are more in each other's path. Also, here we get back into distracting family dynamics.

I've gotten away from drawing, writing and pleasure reading. But, one day at a time, I am working it out.

I have really appreciated your notes on *Ninepatch*. They let me know you care about me.

Love,
Nancyann

Nancyann (Mar. '08) adds, "Another nice thing about my improvements is as I back off and deal with myself. My husband has been less difficult. Sometimes it's even to be together."

(Continued on the next page.)

Differences can be the same.

James (July '08) adds, "Although languages and customs may vary, they satisfy a common purpose."

- - - -F-A-B-R-I-C-S- - - -
(Our Experiences)

LIGHTHOUSE DUTY

Week One

I live in Michigan and every year I sign up to do a stint of "lighthouse duty." While on duty I give tours, and do little upkeep jobs like sweep out the sand from the steps and floor at the end of each day. One week in June I was at Little Sable Point Lighthouse in Silver Lake State Park, near the small and busy town of Silver Lake. I served seven days with a team of others.

Three of the days we had temperatures in the 50's, strong winds, and rain. One day we had to close the top of the lighthouse. People pay to climb the 130 steps to the "catwalk" that goes around the outside of the highest level of the lighthouse. The high winds could blow off their glasses and hats or jackets, and bang around their cameras and binoculars. Winds also push visitors around and make them un-stable. That day we also huddled in the bottom of the lighthouse to stay out of rain.

Two other cold days we took turns working. A pair of us served at the lighthouse while the other pair stayed in the ranch house about two miles away to get warm with hot drinks and dry shelter.

Other days were beautiful -- the reason I volunteer for this duty every year.

Diana (Oct '07) adds, "On the nice days, we had lots of tours and good sales: \$2 for adults and \$1 per child. Children have to be 36" tall-- a safety rule."

MY BOOK STUDY GROUP

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I belong to a book study group that has been meeting monthly for seven years. All of us are women, and we meet in each other's homes. Like all such groups, it has its core members: those who attend most regularly. Some of them have homes they open to the group and others don't. I honor and respect these differences. *(Continued next page.)*

The group also has its own culture, like a family or a professional work situation. Some members are planners, some are talkers, some are listeners, some lead, some follow, some shine, some reflect. As the group has evolved, we do more than simply read and discuss books.

Sometimes we just gab and don't discuss or assign any book. Every December we have a holiday pot luck. We have gone to larger events together. Once we went to a special birthday party of a group member, and another time we attended a member's reception at an art gallery. Once we went out to dinner and saw the play, "La Cage Aux Folles."

Last year, we went on a three-day, two-night trip to Chicago to attend an Abraham-Hicks workshop. A couple of times we have done cut-and-paste art therapy. Once, we met to dig up perennials in a member's yard. She gave them to us, because she was getting ready to move.

If we were children in school, we might be called a "click." If we were in college we might be called a "sorority." When I described our group to a friend, she remarked that it sounds more like a youngster's play group, and perhaps it is.

Carol (July '08) says, "I am happy to report that my life has been going smoothly for some time. I try never to take it for granted, and I practice gratitude."

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Recently, my husband and I took an "Introduction to Islam" class with a local imam -- a world leader in the Islam community. This man visited with the pope when he was in New York, and led prayer over ground zero after the World Trade Center attack. He also serves on international committees to battle the radical misuse of Islam to justify holy war.

The class was part of the Logos Program that we've been taking for the last five years. Logos is a Christian education organization and in another Logos study program, my husband and I are currently in a seven-year study of the Bible, book by book, verse by verse.

Logos also hosts retreats and has a rabbi on staff to teach Christians the Jewish perspective on the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) and Jesus. His classes focus on the commonalities of Judaism and Christianity while acknowledging the differences of the two.

The imam also taught from the perspective of commonalities to Christianity while acknowledging differences. I was amazed to learn how many ideas I had not understood. For example, I did not realize that most Muslims are not Arab. Arabs make up only 18% of the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. I also didn't know that while Muslims do not consider Jesus to be God, they do consider him born of a virgin and the Messiah who will come again. The Christian Gospels are considered part of their core belief system.

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The leader's presentation focused on how Islam emphasized peace and tolerance. (Like Jews, Muslims do not evangelize as Christians do.) But during the question and answer period attendees repeatedly asked questions about the negatives attached to Islam: why is there was so much violence, glorification of martyrdom and abuse to women?

The imam pointed out that many followers of Islam were trying to pressure the radical Muslims -- and the media -- to stop using Islamic religious terms to describe, and justify, criminal behavior. However, he reminded us that politics and religion are very intertwined in countries that are just emerging from being primarily illiterate and agrarian.

He emphasized that it was going to take many years to make headway. I hope to be part of a peaceful understanding.

Georgene (July'08) says, "I enjoyed the seminar very much. In the end, I came to think that it is people who choose to label themselves as practitioners of their religion -- yet really don't practice it --- who perpetuate misguided - thinking. It is challenging to be clear, in word and deed, about my own religious practices."

- - I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S - -
(Reading and Listening)

FOR JOURNALERS

For many years I have been an on-again, off-again journaler. I have spiral notebooks partially filled with the nitty-gritty trivia of my life as well as some serious uplifting thoughts and also gut-wrenching struggles with relationships, substances and theology. I also have several books on journaling and one of my articles on the subject was published in a national magazine.

Recently a book came into my hands that had somehow previously escaped my attention: P Kathleen Adams' JOURNAL TO THE SELF, Twenty-two Paths to Personal Growth. Published in 1990, it is packed with prompts, examples and applications.

This is a great book for getting started with a journal as well as taking your journaling to the next level.

Don (July'08) adds, "I have been planning to share this book information and yesterday's e-Ninepatch provided the push to do it now."

STILL READING

I am slowly reading, a very intriguing historical novel, Wet Grave, by Barbara Hambly. I am reading this book carefully be-cause it is impossible to do otherwise.

On the surface, there is the murder of a black woman in New Orleans in 1835. Underneath run themes of the history of our country, the social status of black mistresses and their half-white children, the economy of pirates, smugglers, and slave-stealers.

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It is told through the eyes of Dr. Benjamin January as a free, black physician who has to deal with the lack of respect his color brings and the fear that his freedom and/or life might be stolen at any time by unscrupulous slavers. (Continued on the next page.)

JW/Joy (July '08) adds, "I wish I could have been in Sebring, FL. with Frances when our circle of spiritual friends celebrated June birthdays! I miss everyone there. I live with my mom in another state now and today we are busy mopping up leaks from the water heater, but all's well aside from that."

ANOTHER BRITISH AUTHOR

I am and have been reading books by Rhys Bowen. She is British but is now living in California with her husband. Her stories are in series form so they are best read in order.

Bowen writes "cozy" mysteries -- the only kind I really like. They have murders and such but the violence is not described in a crude way. In this series, Bowen's hero is Constable Evan Evans. His home base is Wales.

I tend to read books that are in series form and will finish all before I start on a new author. Bowen started writing this string of titles in 1997. I am now reading the latest one she wrote in 2006. Soon, I will go on line to see when her next book is due to be released.

Patricia (July '08) adds, "I like British and Irish authors and have several favorites. I have just finished the ninth book in a series by British author Veronica Heley, Murder in the Park. Her series is about a fifty- year- old widow named Ellie Quicke.

I read that Henley has a new series, "The Abbot Agency." Its first book, False Charity came out in 2007. I will probably start that one, too."

A NEW EARTH:

Awakening to Your Life's Purpose

In this book, Eckhart Tolle, New York Times best-selling author of The Power of Now, expands on the theme of the evolution of human consciousness. He says any life form can undergo 'enlightenment' but it is more than evolutionary progress. It is a leap to an entirely different level of Being and, most important, a lessening of materiality. This is the spiritual awakening we are beginning to see now.

Tolle questions, "Can we rise above materialism: that is to say, awaken our consciousness?" He says Buddha, Jesus and other great teachers were our early messengers. In order to follow their teachings, it is necessary to understand the workings of the mind's ego. Whatever the ego seeks and gets attached to are substitutes for the Being it cannot feel. This very act of recognition is one of the ways that awakening begins.

In Tolle's discussion of the history of Christian teaching, he also clarifies the meaning of the word SIN. In ancient Greek, it means to miss the mark, as an archer who misses the target. So "...to sin means to miss the point of human existence." Awakening to this knowledge is called 'enlightenment', 'salvation' or 'end of suffering' by various faiths.

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I was especially interested in the chapter bearing the same name as the book. In it Tolle explains the expansion and contraction of the universe -- its coming into manifestation and its return to the unmanifested. (*Continued on the next page.*)

He says these movements are reflected in many ways all over the universe. He lists the continuous expansion and contraction of our hearts; the in-halation and exhalation of our breath; the cycles of sleep and wakefulness. He adds that each night in sleep we return to our Source by way of deep, dreamless sleep, and then awaken in the morning re-energized.

This is also true of life cycles: birth, physical growth and also growth in knowledge, activities, possessions and experiences. He cautions readers to watch the growth of our thinking minds as this part tends to take over our outer purpose and growth during early adulthood.

Then the return movement begins. Our families and friends begin to die; our physical form weakens; our circle of influence begins to shrink. As we become 'less', our ego responds with anxiety or depression. Our world is contracting and we are not in control anymore. And finally the consciousness that identified with materiality and form experiences the sunset and the dissolution of that structure.

One day we too will disappear. We will have gone back to where we came from. The cycle will be complete.

June Poucher (June '08) says: "This book has been a growth exercise for me. If you are a seeker, this one is well worth your time."

MY FAVORITE MYSTERY AUTHOR

I am a huge James Lee Burke fan. He's a prolific mystery writer (twenty-nine titles) whose prose is so wonderfully rich and descriptive that it is poetic and fulfilling to the extreme. Reading along, I can dissolve into his prose as he tells of Louisiana swamps and a mighty collage of characters.

Best of all, his main character is a flawed detective named Dave Robicheaux, a Twelve-Stepper like me. I know Burke has to have a wonderful self-discipline to write and craft such eloquent books. As Sam Cooke sang in his 1957 hit, they "send me"-- they just send me. It's utterly amazing.

Of course, who knows what anyone might accomplish with personal discipline if we would just ... well ... commit! Ha!)

Linda (May '08) adds, "Burke's 2007 book, The Tin Roof Blowdown is set in the disaster of Hurricane Katrina."

*

BEST READ IN TEN YEARS

While on a recent vacation to South America, I turned pages of a novel while traveling. It's one of the best I have read in the past five -- or even ten -- years and, to my knowledge, it never hit the best seller list. The name the book is The Splendor of Silence. It's by Indu Sundaresan who also wrote, The Twentieth Bride and A Feast of Roses.

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The story takes place in India. A US soldier on mission in Burma in May of 1942, goes to India in search of his missing brother.

You really must read it!! *(Continued on the next page.)*

M. Joan is single and has no children. She has an adventurous spirit and loves to travel, especially to Central America where she enjoys visiting the native people who always touch her heart.

- - -S-P-E-C-I-A-L- - T-O-P-I-C- - -
(Would the girl I used to be, be proud of the woman I have become?)

LOOKING BACK

I think so. The person I was a decade or two ago would be proud of the person I am today, though she might be a little confused, too.

An old friend told me that when I was in high school, I had said I wanted to be a writer. Today I am a writer. However I must say I never intended to spend as much time writing about weddings as I do! I certainly never dreamed I'd write an *entire* book on the subject!

I also have a house and a husband -- two things I always saw myself having as an adult. However, in my younger days I also pictured myself seeing more of the world during my twenties.

You see, I grew up being told I could "have it all"-- fame, fortune and family -- as long as I pushed hard enough. Guess no one ever tells you that forces outside of your control -- medical problems, mean bosses, recessions, or personal tragedy-- will also have an impact on your experience.

Could I have been a famous jet-setting journalist/ UNHCR aide worker with two houses, a rich businessman husband, and perfect children -- like I dreamed when I was little? Maybe, but I would have had a lot more sleepless nights!

Christa Terry (July '08) adds, "The point is expectations change, but our younger selves exist in history. Even if my younger self wouldn't be hugely proud of my accomplishments, that's no reason I can't choose to be proud of myself in the present."

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(THREAD is on the next page.)

- T-H-R-E-A-D -

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

THE FISHERMAN

**The dream, ritual, journey,
billow through your mind
as you prepare to search for Eden
in the secluded temple
of tall pine.**

**Solitude settles upon you
at the altar of living waters,
angling for a Rainbow,
casting for a King,
patiently waiting for the
Lord of the Deep.**

**Faithful you stand - riveted.
You and the river are one.
Ready to reel,
you know where he hides
in rocks ledges,
sleeps in shady overhangs.**

**And if he honors your hook,
you are grateful that
your energies touch.**

**Poseidon swims through your brain.
How easy it is to effortlessly
slide down the silver stream
knowing you are going home,
returning to the sea.**

Gail (July'08) says, "This poem was written for my son, who would always rather be fishing. He fly fishes, catches and releases, knows every river in Michigan and makes his own flies. He is going to Lake Superior's Isle Royal National Park for a third time this summer. This year he'll be with a boyhood friend and their own young sons."

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(Ninepatch Birthdays follow.)

**NINEPATCH
August Birthdays:**

George 3
Lori 24

--M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G-- T-H-E
-- H-O-U-S-E--
(Ninepatch Business)

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Editor's note: No one responded to this month's prompt, "The greatest thing I can do for others is..." but I have a comment.

In July of 2004, I pondered a related matter: "My life's purpose." A few words came to me. I wrote them on a note pad that still hangs from a round magnet on one side of my refrigerator, "God wants me to feel my life and share that with others. 'Self-improvement' and 'trying' are not part of this."

It's never too late for you to share your experience ! There's always space in *Ninepatch* or readers thoughts.

Next month's prompt:

"A friend helped me..."

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