

BYM Young Friends Epistle 2011

This is a story about a young elf and her adventures of the past year. This was a particularly caring, trusting, and loving elf¹; her name was Yfs². Yfs was very excited for this year because she knew that over the course of the year there would be five Challenges Of Niceness. Yfs wanted oh-so very badly to go to these Challenges Of Niceness (or CONs)³, but the way to these CONs was dark and difficult. Yfs did not think she could make it to these CONs without help, so she visited her old friend, Bym⁴.

“I want to go to five cons,” explained Yfs, once she and Bym had exchanged hugs, “but the way to these cons is so dark, I cannot do it without help.”

Bym was a nice old man and replied, “Do not fear the darkness, for I will give you a gift.” Bym handed Yfs a small glowing orange ball. “This is your own personal sun. It is powerful and will glow in the darkest of allies.”

Yfs was very thankful and asked, “What do you call this sun that can light up any alley?”

“I call it an Alleysun⁵” answered Bym.

With the help of this Alleysun, Yfs made her way over the Creek of Geese⁶ to the first CON. When she arrived at this Challenge Of Niceness, she instantly realized what she was supposed to do. She had arrived at a large forest that was entirely lacking in color! Yfs immediately busted out her dyes of love and started tie-dyeing like a furious rainbow. Soon, her passionate coloring had a tie-dyed every object at the CON. She celebrated by feasting on Panbricks, the result of baking deep dish pots filled with pancake batter. Yum!

Well-fed, she journeyed on to the second CON, which was held in the capitol⁷. There she was reunited with her older brother, Yafs⁸, whom she had not seen in a long while and whom she missed dearly. While adding color to the world was certainly a great kindness, here she used her power of love and dedication to create niceness on a much larger scale. She learned about how the larger population of elves was working to influence the ruling wizards to create peace, help less-able elves, and care for sick elves. She wrote letters with a larger elf organization, concerning the war abroad Yfs also reflected on what a community meant to her⁹.

Yfs next ventured to the Hill of Langley¹⁰, eager to explore her love and let it shine out into the world! She learned about the unfair treatment of foreign giants in the forest¹¹, and was moved to write letters to the ruling counsel again! Yfs also learned about the harassment of some elves who love other elves of the same gender, and realized that something like that would never happen at the Challenges of Niceness! She created a message to send to all of her fellow elves, regardless of sexual orientation, telling them of the love she had experienced at CONs¹². The counsel greatly appreciated her words, and saw fit to write Yfs back, personally. Yfs knew that there was always a way she could further spread her love, but for now she was satisfied.

Yfs had become very tired, because she was a teenage elf and was growing very rapidly. Sometimes she would grow and not even realize it, and thus became very hungry. Soon her hunger was insatiable, and there was not enough food¹³! When Yfs went to forage for nuts and berries, she never knew how much to get because of her drastically changing hunger needs-sometimes she got too much, sometimes too little. She decided to face this challenge head on, and sought the help of the Alleysun and other teenage elves who were concerned for Yfs. Together, they traveled to a distant sea-port¹⁴ to clear their heads and solve the problem. With their help, Yfs came up with a solution. When she was about to grow, she would receive a warning or a smoke signal¹⁵ from the forest to help her prepare. If she did not receive a smoke signal, she would not grow.

Having conquered this dilemma, Yfs set off to her next CON. Having felt the power of love, she wanted to do more for the world and spread her compassion. She decided to help others, by traveling to a far-away land with the help of an ancient, mythical creature with wheels, the Bus¹⁶. Yfs was intimidated by the name of the land - the Clearing¹⁷ - but she didn't let her fear stop her. She

immediately set to work, doing all that she could to improve her settings. She cleared many a path to help lost travelers find their way to the Clearing, and painted signs for directions. Yfs also chopped wood to keep her and her fellow wanderers warm on the lonely winter nights that were sure to come. Happy with the job she had done, she asked the Bus to take her home, and he happily obliged!

As Yfs set off to her last con, taking place at a rocky, stony, run¹⁸ she experienced a feeling of bitter-sweetness. She had accomplished so much that year, tackled so many situations, fought off the doom of growing pains, and had spread her love and compassion throughout her forest with the help of her friend Bym and her trusty light, Alleysun. Yfs knew she wouldn't be able to go to CONs in the same way as she had before because she was becoming like her brother Yafs, which saddened her greatly. However, she also realized that she was giving her younger sibling, Jyf¹⁹, a wonderful opportunity to spread his own light and love. She knew that Jyf would not let her down and his heart was good and pure, as all elves deep down are. Yfs decided that having worked hard the whole year, she would take this opportunity to let loose and have some fun. Hard work is good and satisfactory, but Yf was wise now, and knew that play was key to her happiness.

With a full heart, Yfs set off once more to meet her old friend Bym, and thank him for his help²⁰. They played together and built a super great community! Also, they wanted to learn stuff about growing up so they learned about sexuality and communication. Also, they learned about the misconceptions of torture in the forest.²¹

With the knowledge that her love would be spread into the world by means other than Challenges of Niceness, Yfs welcomed her next adventure. She could go anywhere and do anything, but she would always remember what she learned from her friends and experiences. Yfs also promised to always season her meals and life with SPICES²², because otherwise it would be very bland and hardly worth tasting!

Footnotes:

1. Young Friends Gathering Expectations
2. BYM Young Friends
3. Young Friends call conferences CONs
4. Baltimore Yearly Meeting (pronounced Bim)
5. Alison Duncan- BYM Youth Secretary
6. Goose Creek Meeting, Lincoln, VA
7. Friends Meeting of Washington, Washington D.C
8. Young Adult Friends- they visit YFs during November Con because they are home from college on break
9. Workshops at November Con included: letter writing with FCNL to lobby for START; Friends learned about the American Association of People with Disabilities from Jim Dickson; friends also learned about the growing AIDS epidemic and how it effects many Americans; and participated in a BYM Visioning Session
10. Langley Hill Friends Meeting, McLean, VA
11. At Love Con, Friends learned about illegal immigrants who are treated unfairly
12. Friends also helped the 'Do Good Deeds' Committee create a video for the "It Gets Better" Project, which speaks to gay teens because of the growing number of gay teen suicides
13. Over the course of the 2010-2011 year, Young Friends had an influx of attenders
14. Annapolis Friends Meeting, Annapolis, MD
15. Young Friends now have to preregister in order to attend conferences, which was always encouraged, but is now required
16. Young Friends take a bus to a geographical region of the Yearly Meeting that they don't normally visit for the April Conference.

17. The Clearing is a wooded retreat center owned by Richmond Friends Meeting
18. Stony Run Friends Meeting in Baltimore, MD.
19. May is our traditional graduation conference, after which seniors join Young Adult Friends and 8th graders from Junior Young Friends or JYF join Young Friends
20. BYM Annual Session at Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD
21. Young Friends completed workshops on teen sexuality and how to communicate emotion; they completed a cool workshop on torture, and learned about class by playing with popcorn. also, they played wink, capture the flag, and other super fun activities including intergenerational activities in produce department and the all age celebration. They did not, however, sleep very much.
22. SPICES- Quaker Testimonies- we hope you are familiar with these...