

President's Message

The Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels

There was once a Young Woman. It matters little whether she was beautiful; whether her skin was like ebony, mahogany or ivory; whether her eyes were azure, hazel or brown; whether her hair was jet-black or flaxen-gold or amber. What *does* matter is that she had found a Formula, a Formula for what some in her shire and further abroad even called an Elixir.

The Formula was beautiful in its simplicity. Where discord had been sown and had taken root and its spiny stems had grown, where the Disputatious Ones had taken control, where People Of Good Will could not resolve their differences without entering the Halls Of The Black Robes with their Do-That and Don't-Do-This and Do-It-Like-This-And-No-Other-Way, the Young Woman's Formula simply said: do it the simplest way, Do It Your Way.

Before long, the Formula's charms became known far and wide. People Of Good Will from the cold lands of the North, from the warm lands of the South, and from the many, many lands in between saw the beauty of Do It Your Way. Hardly a compact was made without People Of Good Will agreeing – in the unlikely event that any seeds of discord would be blown their way – to adopt Do It Your Way. Even in the Halls Of Talk, the Distinguished Talkers nodded in assent and gave their benevolent consent to Do It Your Way. The Masters Of The Peoples even congregated in Gotham to produce a Covenant Between Peoples recognising the virtues of Do It Your Way. And thus, the Formula, the Elixir, prospered.

In one Little Land, where there was much, much Do It Your Way, the Distinguished Talkers in the Halls Of Talk issued a Book of Rules on Do It Your Way. It was as simple as simple could be: this Book of Rules had only nineteen Rules and was soon called the Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels. The Young Woman was very fond of the Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels. Into it she poured her Elixir, and the Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels quickly became the envy of many Distinguished Talkers in the Halls Of Talk across the globe.

After five-and-twenty years or so, the time came to touch up the Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels. For sure, it had not lost any of its lustre, its simplicity was still the cause of much envy, and the people of the Little Land were very anxious to keep it simple, ere it become just another big Book of Rules with all those Do-That's and Don't-Do-This and Do-It-Like-This-And-No-Other-Way. They thus sent the Young Woman out on a journey, to the Goldsmith, to polish some of the jewels, to update some of the Rules. And all were happy.

Alas, in the meantime, many things had happened out in the wild.

In the meantime, the Disputatious Ones –those accustomed to the Halls Of The Black Robes with their Do-That and Don't-Do-This and Do-It-Like-This-And-No-Other-Way – wanted to do things *their* way. They shouted, "*Why nineteen Rules when we can have nineteen hundred and nineteen? Why keep it simple if we want to plunge the People Of Good Will into a quagmire of Rules, from which only we, the Disputatious Ones, can extricate them?*" Many Disputatious Ones had friends in the Halls Of The Black Robes and in the Halls Of Talk, and some these friends sometimes turned a charitable ear to the expostulations of the Disputatious Ones. And because of this, many People Of Good Will thought, "*What, pray, is the difference between Do It Your Way and the Halls Of The Black Robes? Let us seek another formula, another elixir!*" And many of them did.

In the meantime, the Strong And Nimble, who also had many differences to resolve, and who could not resolve those differences in the Halls Of The Black Robes in the many, many lands where they displayed their strength and nimbleness in friendly and good-natured rivalry, had adopted Do It Your Way. They adopted a Do It Your Way that became a Do It The Strong And Nimble Way, and only certain especially wise Formerly Strong And Nimble Ones could sit in judgment. The young Strong And Nimble did not like this, and they turned to the Disputatious Ones, who turned to the Halls Of The Black Robes, who looked at the Strong And Nimble Way and did not like what they saw. And some of the people in the Halls Of The Black Robes felt that there was no difference between the Strong And Nimble Way and Do It Your Way. And some people turned to the Makers Of The Papers, who found that this made a heck of a tale.

In the meantime, some Masters Of The Peoples decided that Do It Your Way was the best way to resolve their differences with Masters Of The Electrum Stater, for the Masters Of The Peoples would not tread anyone else's Halls Of The Black Robes, and the Masters Of The Electrum Stater had no taste for the Halls Of The Black Robes in the lands of the Masters Of The Peoples where they spent their Electrum Staters. And all agreed that this was a good thing – for a while; that is to say until certain Distinguished Talkers in the Halls Of Talk (and even more would-be Distinguished Talkers in the Halls Of Talk) thought it outrageous that Masters Of The Peoples could be subject to Do It Your Way. And the Makers Of The Papers caught on to this too, and again found that it made a heck of a tale. In turn, more and more Disputatious Ones and Distinguished Talkers in the Halls Of Talk (and even more would-be Distinguished Talkers in the Halls Of Talk) shouted louder and louder, "*Down with Do It Your Way!*"

And thus, what was thought to be a simple stroll for the Young Woman and her Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels may yet become a perilous journey. We do not yet know what may befall her, for the Young Woman has hardly set out. Let us keep a watchful eye over her, over the Cup Of The Nineteen Jewels, over the Formula and the Elixir and over Do It Your Way.

ELLIOTT GEISINGER

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