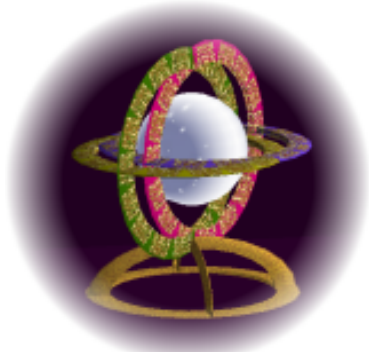




A Season of Happiness

Focus



Bring Back The Magic

When I was a child I had a picture book - Rupert The Bear - and I used to look through it every night before going to sleep. A particular section fascinated me and I would turn to those pages to see what Rupert was up to, or whether he was there at all. You see, sometimes he was, at other times not. As my reading skills were fairly basic, there was no way of knowing if I was on the same page as the night before, except for the pictures, and they weren't always reliable because they kept changing. I don't recall being disappointed when I was unable

to find Rupert, knowing without doubt that he would be back again sometime, hopefully next evening. Was this magic? I don't think I even considered the possibility - I didn't know what magic was then. There was no thought of asking my parents for a reason - that would have let them into my very own secret. Anyway, I was delighted that it kept happening without knowing why. I simply trusted, I believed. And that kind of belief made my world a wonderful place.

The beauty of magic is that it surpasses the rules of commonsense. It does, however, have rules of its own that are dependent on circumstances and the believer's integrity. The appearance and disappearance of the pictures in the Rupert book, only occurred for me at bedtime when I was alone in my room, but never during the day. This was a condition I had set down for the wonder to keep happening. I would not have dared to look for it at any other time, because that would have broken the spell and the pictures would never change again, never ever. At some period, I must have outgrown Rupert The Bear and the magic he performed, only recalling later on in life how the anticipation and discovery of those precious moments had made a little boy's bedtime so appealing. Now, as an adult, I am expected to shun magic and any kind of make-believe. But I can't do that, nor do I want to, and I suspect there are many like me. How often do ordinary, intelligent people trust in superstition - crossing fingers, carrying lucky charms, rubbing Buddha's tummy when buying a Lotto ticket? Then there are the home-spun rules for success - following a specific routine, not one step out of place, or our team will lose the next game. None of these provisos can change the future or affect it in any way, and yet we put our faith in the most unlikely, the impossible. Despite the fact that it doesn't always work, we do it again and again. That's the way of magic - sometimes it happens, sometimes not. If it was predictable, it simply wouldn't be magic.

The continuing popularity of fantasy has to say something about our capacity to suspend disbelief. The events in Star Wars haven't happened yet, but we are happy to accept that they might. Even if George Lucas claimed his stories were simply an invention of his creative mind, they came from that part of him which delights in make-believe. And he appealed to the child in all of us, the naive, uncomplicated seeker of a wonder far beyond the boring sameness of our day-to-day lives. J K Rowling gave us Harry Potter. The character became an icon, and a geeky boy in glasses was our unlikely hero, one able to overcome impossible odds that would have overwhelmed ordinary folk like us. Harry, of course, had the advantage of magic. Who amongst us didn't wish for some of it, just a little to combat those up-and-coming trials that we knew were going to turn out disastrously? Thinking like this gives us an edge on the ones who can't - those whose lives are devoted to proving something exists before they can declare unequivocally that it truly does. We need people like them to positively define reality, to draw the line just so that we can cross it and experience the untrue, feel the magic.

As children we cherished excitement of the unknown, especially when it was nice and friendly; and even the scary stuff was stimulating. Monsters lurking under the bed or in the closet, and the

shadows of goblins climbing the tree outside were our first appreciation of the difference between good and evil. They were awesome, but we learned to combat and overcome them, because our parents taught us how by employing rituals and chants, special remedies known only to the family. The amazing thing was that they worked, they must have, otherwise we wouldn't be here today. Eventually, we put away these childish thoughts, in particular the need to frighten ourselves half to death just so that we had an excuse to climb into bed with Mum and Dad. As adults, we know there were no gremlins lurking in the shadows. That being the case, why do we still insist on resurrecting them? We continue to read hair-raising books by Stephen King and watch creepy movies about vampires and demonic possessions. Are we simple-minded masochists, or just kids at heart trying to rekindle the exhilarating conflict between us and some supernatural force that can only be defeated by belief in ourselves and the hidden magic within every one of us?

Throughout history, magic has always been there, performed by hobgoblins and leprechauns, fairies and other mythical creatures. In olden times it was a convenient way of explaining the inexplicable, strange events that seemed to have no logical reason for happening. Without the science of modern medicine to diagnose an aneurism, an apparently healthy person who dropped down dead on the spot might well have been the suspected victim of a curse. Imagine someone arguing with that man or woman moments before and pointing an accusatory finger at them. They would probably have risen in status to become the resident witch, feared for the harm they could do, also revered for the benefits they might bring; all because the villagers found it necessary to believe in a power beyond understanding for the continuing safety and prosperity of the community. It sounds like mass hysteria, but when you consider the subservient lifestyle of the majority in those days, they had little enough going for them and could be forgiven for taking advantage of any magic that was on offer.

That mentality, of course, has gradually faded as humanity nurtured a science which can explain almost everything. Thanks to this knowledge, life has become predictable and things which go bump in the night are no longer to be feared. Magic has no place in modern life because we don't need it any more; or do we? The wonder of the unexpected continues to thrill. Take a look at the so-called reality TV shows. A person returns home after a brief period away to discover that their modest home or overgrown garden has been transformed by a bunch of strangers. A workaholic who hasn't had a vacation in years is suddenly told that one has been organised for them with a well-known personality as their host and companion. Every day and throughout the world, surprises galore are presented at events like milestone anniversaries and birthdays. None of these are anything to do with magic, but the recipients of them react as if they were, and the buzz felt by those who have made the occasion happen must be similar to a magician's satisfaction on casting a spell that actually works. Classic fairy tales are modernised and re-invented as series or movies, not to mention comic-book heroes. We can't get enough of them because we identify with the weak and helpless and have a need to ride with them as they conquer adversity. Sometimes magic is the only way to achieve that and, ridiculous though it might sound, we expect it to be used in the context of the story and would dearly love to borrow some of it for our own use.

The problem with finding isn't easy because, apparently, it doesn't actually exist. Despite this, many have tried and are still trying. Opium dens used to be the favourite of those searching either for oblivion, or an answer to their problems that normality fell short of providing. Were the sorry individuals who frequented them merely numbing the effects of reality, or hoping to escape from it in an alternative, magical world? The same must be wondered about those who take other drugs, both hard and party-types. Even LSD has re-appeared in a copycat form, and magic mushrooms are still popular. Ingesting any of these hallucinogens can prove fatal, not only for the damage that they can do to the body, but particularly in the way that they are said to distort the mind, causing the subject to believe in the impossible. Not having tried any of them, I can only imagine the amazing, sometimes frightening places the users find themselves in; but I don't think the drug itself is the instigator of the hallucinations: it is merely the key which unlocks that part of the mind where they are stored. They might be childhood memories, nightmares, spooky movies seen recently or long ago, anything that made an impression and has subsequently been

forgotten or deliberately suppressed for some reason. We all have the makings of fantasies, our own source of personal magic buried deep inside our heads, and we may, from time to time, benefit by giving them an airing; yet not all of us need narcotics to release them.

LSD was the in-thing of the 60's, but many who had never experienced its effects were carried away on a magic carpet which was not a drug at all. It was a concept called flower-power. From accountants, to shop-assistants and probably even police officers, ordinary people throughout London and eventually the World willingly embraced a way of thinking that required only one prerequisite: the fervent belief in something which ought to be the right of everyone, but very few experienced - peace. It was a truly magic word that had people feeling warm inside and accepting that everything was beautiful, and love was everything. Some wore outrageous, brightly coloured clothes, while others remained in their conservative attire, and no-one cared because they were all one, all together. And that togetherness did something that had never been done before - it stopped a war. For a brief period in our turbulent history, we were thinking the same way, believing in the same magic; and it worked!

What's the point of all this? Well, in truth, it's whatever you want to make it. You can be someone who has to touch and feel something before you can admit to its existence; or you can simply believe that it will appear for you whenever you need it. That's trust, optimism; it's people praying, wishing, dreaming; it's knowing you can win Lotto, even with the odds stacked against you; it's not looking for a reason, or an explanation, just accepting that sometimes things happen as if by magic; and believing that they actually do. Life truly is better that way.

Our eBooks are available now in formats to suit popular eReaders, PC and Mac

**The must-have
Self-Help eBook**



**Romance/
Suspense**



Horror



Heroic Fantasy



Visit the eBooks section to read the obligation-free, extended previews and get a good feel for the books before you buy. Or you can send one as a gift to a friend. Just click on the direct link to your favourite eBook store to see how.

Where every effort has been made to be accurate and fair-minded, comments and opinions expressed on this website are based on personal experience and do not necessarily reflect the views of the wider community or those groups and institutions mentioned. A Season of Happiness and its staff accept no responsibility for any outcome based on suggestions offered. What works for us may not work for you. Please bear this in mind.