

Unwelcome Visitors – Linda Wheeler Donahue

I hope it rings a bell with many of you. All my best.

Summertime often means visitors. They can bring a joyous change of pace to our daily lives. I usually enjoy guests and try to extend warm hospitality. However, in a recent occurrence, my guests were not only unwelcome but were banished from ever returning to my home.

It all began when the power went out.

When that happens, my feelings of vulnerability are accentuated. My private little world is powered by electricity so when the power goes out, I am left feeling much more helpless than usual.

WILD WEATHER

It was a hot June day when unexpectedly we were struck with wild weather. It was a bit like a ten-minute Category-5 hurricane! The air swirled whipping tree limbs every which way. As the rain slanted sideways and the winds whipped, the power went out.

I curled up on the sofa trying to read by the dim daylight from the window. After a half hour of that, I felt chilly and wanted to get into my bed and pull up the covers. This would not be easy as my residential elevator would not work without electricity. I drove my powerchair to the foot of the staircase, looked up at what looked like a mountain, took a deep breath, and began the arduous process of dragging myself up the steps. One by one on my bottom, and resting between each anguishing step, I ascended the stairs. When I reached the top, I was panting and feeling mighty sorry for myself.

There I was plunked on the floor, useless legs splayed out in front of me, contributing zero to my effort, arms, shoulders, and hands hurting from doing all the work of propelling my entire body.

I fought back tears.

There was just a short way to go to enter my bedroom and reach my bed. So again I dragged myself across the floor and got close to my bed. However, as much as I tried, I could not accomplish that final thrust to get myself up from the floor and onto the bed.

VISITORS ARRIVAL

I laid there on the floor as the house became quite dark when, unexpectedly, a loud group of former friends came by to visit. They burst into the house; all seven of them were rowdy, unruly, and boisterous. There was Crippled, Pathetic, Paralyzed, Woeful, Helpless, Dejected, and Rejected. I had not seen those post-polio demons for a long time so I did what any hostess would do and welcomed them in.

They joined me there on the floor and we had ourselves a good old pity party. There were lots of “ain’t it awful,” “woe is me,” and “glass half empty” conversation.

Soon it was completely dark and I heard the welcome sound of my daughter, Sarah, entering the house. I banished the shrill group of former friends while Sarah came to my aid, picked me up, and lifted me onto the bed. There we ate hot pizza by candlelight and eventually laughed about my folly.

REMEDIES

A bad situation can be turned into a positive one if we learn from it. Here are some changes I have made in preparation for the next inevitable power outage:

- ☑ Cozy blankets are in a closet on the first floor
- ☑ Ordered a Lifeline pendant
- ☑ Mobile phone is charged and in wheelchair side pouch
- ☑ Comfy clothing for layering is on both floors
- ☑ Battery-operated radio is handy
- ☑ Flashlights and extra batteries are on both floors

REFLECTION

This event reminds me that no matter how evolved I think I am, those old polio demons are still there hiding just under the surface of my daily life.

In addition, as for those unwelcome visitors, they have been banished and ordered to stay away forevermore.