

They sat together, alone.

The two men looked alike. Each carried the body of Humpty Dumpty. They seem comfortable in their skin, as someone would say. However, one was bald headed, the other was blessed or condemned with visiting a barber every two weeks. His grey hair looked trimmed. The two men sat at the same table in the coffee shop. They looked as though they were related. They could be brothers, cousins, or friends.

The bald headed fellow was deeply focused on his card game. Solitaire put the sparkle in his eyes. Color of his eyes didn't matter. It was the Ace of Spades that he was hoping to draw. This game of gambling, of one on one was enhanced with two deck of cards. Empty card holders lay on the table next to a cold mug of coffee. The plate of pastry crumbs was being picked up by the barista. He didn't notice. The six of hearts was slapped down on the seven. He smiled. So far he was winning.

The grey haired man held his paperback book up close so that he didn't miss a word. No electronic books for him. He was used to the tactile method of reading since his days when he believed in Santa Claus. The novel was a western, a popular writer for many guys who take time to read old favorites. His eye glasses helped capture every word creating moving pictures in his mind. His pastry was half-eaten. The sticky morsel was enjoying its freedom. It was baked to be eaten, however it, like the Gingerbread Boy, would have liked to jumped up and scrambled. Perhaps it would when no one was looking.

The two guys were together, alone. They were happy in their contentment with each other nearby. Perhaps this was an every week occurrence, maybe a once a year meeting. Didn't matter. They were together, alone.

Quilters are the same. Retreats are opportunities which embody the together and alone aspect of fun. There can be 50 to 60 ladies quilting in the same room and not talking for a long period of time. Of course, there are gusts of laughter surrounding the quiet ones. Meeting to talk and laugh is one thing. Meeting to sew a stitch, quilt a design, create a pattern at one table is another thing. Concentration abounds when quilters meet. We could do the same creative work at our different homes. For some reason brothers, sisters, quilters want the close encounter of comradeship in their activities. Being along together brings out the best in us. We can take time to do what we like alone and at the same time do it with our cohorts in crime.

For the most part having a beverage and snack in a public house leads to chatter with the friends we choose to be together with at a specific time. Perhaps that is the reason for postponing the grocery shopping for an hour or two. Errands like returning library books and picking up the mail can wait when warm hearted laughter calls. We do have a choice. We can sit alone quietly and read, play cards or watch other people. Or we can visit with friends, talk quietly, laugh loudly and enjoy a different kind of fun.

And sometimes it is comforting just to be together, alone.

Lana Russ