

Home Remedy

© Joanne Klassen

Nov. 21, 2013 jklassen@write-away.net

While driving to have dinner at the home of a friend recently, my tooth began to ache. I asked my husband Ted to stop at a drug store so I could pick up some oil of clove.

"Oil of clove? Why don't you just take an aspirin?" he asked.

"It's Mom's home remedy," I told him. I got some; it helped, although I ended up smelling spicy.

When we got home as I was putting the tiny bottle on the shelf of the medicine cabinet, I wondered if oil of clove had any other uses. I went to the computer; searched Google and found out this little \$4.99 bottle packs quite a punch.

Besides numbing pain, oil of clove turns out to be anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal. It has been known to cure yeast infections and is used to rid people and pets of parasites, inflammation, breathing difficulties and stomach upset. It has been used for immune system building, treating cholera, and as an insect repellent. It is used in soaps and lotions for smoother skin. It is even an aphrodisiac... the ancient's Viagra.

Suddenly I began to chuckle. I pictured an unsuspecting person like me with a terrific tooth ache, dabbing a drop of oil of clove on their sore tooth and finding their upset stomach, ailments and discomfort disappearing, bugs no longer bothering them and being suddenly, powerfully sexually aroused.

And to think I might have taken an aspirin! ■



Joanne Klassen

Joanne Klassen, founder of Heartspace, home of Transformative Life Writing, is the author of *Tools of Transformation* and many other books. Heartspace classes are popular in Canada and Europe. The Manitoba Association of Seniors Centres works with Heartspace to train facilitators to bring *Discover Yourself Through Life Writing* courses to seniors centres across Manitoba.

Works of other women from these Life Writing courses are On this page.

The Night Before Christmas

© Sandra Bater

I was nibbling on one of Santa's cookies, an angel that Jaylene had coated with thick purple icing, when the words of an old familiar poem tumbled around in my mind.

*'Twas the night before Christmas
When all through the house
Not a creature was stirring
Not even a mouse
The stockings were hung by the
chimney with care
In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon
would be there.
The children were nestled
All snug in their beds
While visions of sugar plums
danced in their head.*

The children were snug in their beds, hopefully sleeping, and it wasn't even ten o'clock. We had hung up our stockings, not by the chimney, but on the entertainment unit. Of course, their visions would be of things other than sugar plums. Caden's visions would be of computer games and hockey gear. Jaylene would be dreaming about a real white mouse.

Throughout the day we had tracked Santa's progress on the internet. We watched the Santa icon move from country to country on a radar screen. Around six o'clock, there was an

important bulletin. Weather conditions for sleigh travel were perfect. Santa was far ahead of schedule. Children must go to bed early.

So we set out cookies and a can of Coke for Santa.. Then, we went outside with carrots and reindeer food that Jaylene had made at daycare - a mixture of oatmeal and green food colouring. Caden broke up the carrots and put them on the driveway. Jaylene scattered the food all around the yard. Caden taped a sign on the front door - Santa Enter Here - and I plugged in the Christmas lights.

I was ready for the children to go to bed but they weren't. Robert wouldn't be home until after midnight. Caden especially missed his Dad when he had to work the evening shift.

The children were climbing and jumping on the furniture like mountain goats and running around the house with Zippy barking at their heels. I made popcorn, put on a DVD and finally herded them into the family room. Once they had their PJs on, we all settled on the sofa, even Zippy.

I finished eating the angel cookie and left Caden's Christmas tree cookie, coated in camouflage green icing and decorated with bright coloured Smarties, for Robert. I trusted that he would also pick up the carrots on the driveway.

I had just nestled down in my bed waiting for Robert to come home when Zippy came whining to me beside the bed. I heard a noise not exactly a clatter, but some kind of disturbance. Leaving Zippy in the bedroom, I checked the children and went downstairs. It couldn't be Robert. He always phoned if he was going to be home early.

I stood at the foot of the stairs and listened. A dull tapping sound was coming from the direction of the Family Room. I walked slowly into the room. Illuminated by the Christmas lights, I saw two adult deer standing on the deck eating the oats that Jaylene had scattered. I stood in awe as, oblivious to my presence, they moved around, head down searching for the oats in the snow. These gentle creatures were so close, I imagined reaching out my hand and touching them. They effortlessly leapt off the deck, stopped in the front yard to eat the carrots, leisurely crossed the road and disappeared among my neighbour's evergreens.

I thought about Christmas morning, Caden and Jaylene checking the yard to see if the reindeer had eaten the food, about their astonishment when they saw the footprints on the deck. What an extraordinary Christmas present for all of us. ■

A Winter Encounter

By Astrid Schuhmann

Winter had arrived during the night. The morning saw a thick blanket of snow covering the landscape. I was looking at nature's permission to postpone any unfinished yard work until the following spring. For the next four months, the winter weather would keep the grounds pristine and white for me.

Dressed in mittens, boots and coat to face the outdoors, I pushed open the screen door against a snow drift. I stepped onto the porch, the kitchen compost pail, full to the brim, in one hand. The bright morning sun was greeting from a cloudless blue sky. It was cold, the air clear and odorless.

I carefully navigated through the heaps of snow on my way down the stairs, then turned towards the back-yard, which lay frozen

and still. Streaks of snow were pasted against the tree trunks, powdery white was piled high on their branches, and tender flakes, as if diligently arranged, covered even the most delicate twigs. A gentle breath of air floated by, lifting a dusting of snow from some of the branches up into the air and towards the sunlight. Only a few seconds later, after descending to the ground like a glittering swarm of ethereal insects, it blended into the vast peaceful white.

As I took my next step, the ground in front of me suddenly seemed to shift. Startled, I stopped. The snow was moving again and then burst into all directions in an explosion of flakes. Less than five feet in front of me, a deer had been roused from an indentation in the ground where it had become com-

pletely camouflaged by the snow while waiting out the previous night's weather. Facing me was a stunning animal, a buck, his regal antlers held high and proud. He was as startled as I. Two creatures stood motionless observing each other for a few heartbeats. He seemed to study me with slight apprehension, his glance engrossed and curious like that of a young child. I was hoping he would linger, but in a sudden move, he turned and took a few strides across the patio towards the snow-laden fir tree at the edge. Then he slowed in front of the fir, hesitated, stopped and turned around to me as if to bid farewell. The magnificent animal was standing there, behind him the morning sun glinting off the freshly fallen snow and bathing the surroundings in

a myriad of lights. It was nature's briefest gift of serenity, certainty and connectedness. He slowly turned his head away again and quietly disappeared among the trees on the riverbank.

For a while, I stood entranced until suddenly I became aware of the cold again. Still preoccupied, I tightened the grip on my pail, walked to the bin and emptied the scraps on top of the frozen peels that had come before. I slowly walked back to the house and once more glanced back at the subtle tracks in the snow. ■

Winnipeg, November 07, 2013 - © Astrid Schuhmann. Astrid is training as a MASC Life Writing Peer Leader. She currently facilitates/co-facilitates a Life Writing Workshop at the Charleswood Senior Centre in Winnipeg, MB.



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Your
Musical
Memories
Can Still
Be Heard

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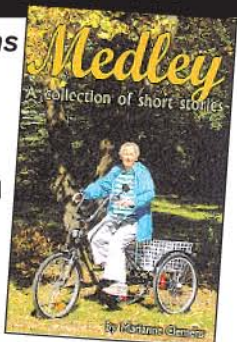
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