

Thimbles. Thimbles. Thimbles. Thimbles.

Keys. Keys. Keys.

Tea. Tea.

By Manndi DeBoef

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *We published a couple of narratives by this emerging author a year or so ago and since then she has impressed as she grows as a writer. Manndi (her sp) honours (Cdn sp) that well worn but still serviceable maxim: write about what you know. This can be harder than you think—because there is a tendency to take information for granted and the unwanted temptation to sentimentalize. The author has skillfully sidestepped both these pitfalls. The writing is clear and engaging and the voice utterly honest. It's like sitting down and listening to a good friend who shares some of her cherished memories not about anything extraordinary but the all too familiar and ordinary things most of us take for granted, see without seeing—like thimbles, keys and tea—and what these mean in her life. Thing is, Manndi DeBoef does it better than most.*

**QUALITY QUOTABLE (for the love of language...)**

This particular antique shop had a large fishbowl full to the brim of old keys. Car keys, hotel keys, luggage keys, you name it, any type of key imaginable. The curiosity compelling me to find the most bizarre, unique shapes of each key and wonder what lock that particular key opened, was almost more than I could stand.

THIMBLES. KEYS. TEA.

I think one of the reasons I love flea markets, antique shops, trinket treasure barns, and any other likewise *old stuff* shopping venue is the nostalgically welcoming walk down memory lane...

These three thimbles are beautifully painted, unique little treasures, which I am sure each tell an intriguing story of a crafter's pastime. Am I a seamstress? *No*. Have I ever used a thimble (for sewing purposes) in my life? *Also, no*. So why on earth would I purchase not one, but *three* porcelain thimbles at a never-before-visited antique shop on a weekend adventure outside of St.

Louis, Missouri? Because of the precious memory they evoke in my too-many-to-relay-year-old-childhood-mind, of course...

Summers spent on my Grandparent's farm in Willard, Missouri, just outside of the Queen City, Springfield. I was a small town *city kid*; thus, I had an overzealous desire to engage in all things country-related during that one week every summer spent with my Grandparents. My Grandpa would play a rousing game of checkers with me every evening after dinner when he would retire to his favorite cigar-laden threadbare chair in the basement just in time for the evening news.

Every time I see a National Geographic magazine, I am reminded of my Grandfather, who subscribed to the monthly issues for years. He had stockpiles of these historical treasures piled high on the otherwise usable ping-pong table in the basement. I never read the articles as a child, but I greatly enjoyed being transported to foreign lands via the exotic photographs gracing those slick magazine pages.

My Grandma would play *Hide the Thimble* with me during the day while Grandpa was outdoors tending to whatever farm chores he saw fit. She would hide the thimble somewhere in the house and then excitedly utter *hot* or *cold* based on my proximation to the hidden silver finger cover. When I started getting warmer...then hot, I knew the search had nearly reached sweet fruition. Then it would be my turn to hide the small thimble and give playful clues to help my Grandma find that tiny silver treasure that brought me such joy. Such a simple game of *Hide and Seek* with a far-reaching memory locked in the treasure trove of my youth.

*The keys.* This particular antique shop had a large fishbowl full to the brim of old keys. Car keys, hotel keys, luggage keys, you name it, any type of key imaginable. The curiosity compelling me to find the most bizarre, unique shapes of each key and wonder what lock that particular key opened, was almost more than I could stand.

Perhaps the key to a large cedar chest which housed the personal belongings of a Titanic survivor. Or, the hotel key of a famous author, like Stephen King, who was inspired to write his most famous novel, *The Shining*, at the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado. Maybe a key leading to a locked room in which hundreds of dusty dry-aged vintages were stored and used only for the absolute creme de la creme of visitors in the raging post-civil war era. The possibilities are endless. One thing is for sure, my obsession with old keys assuredly lies in the mysterious lock which opens an unknown treasure just waiting to be discovered.

As for the old teacup and saucer, one can never have too many! I love tea, I love everything it evokes. I have never personally witnessed, or experienced, a British inspired *Spot of Tea* which did not, in some small way, contribute to a more relaxed, cheerful, delightfully induced mood.

Consider the many stories this particular teacup could tell! Being nearly a hundred years old, I daydream about whose delicate hands held this particular set. What conversations it was privy to, and the rich historical atmosphere it beheld simply by adorning the kitchen, or sitting room, in each house it occupied over the spanning years.

*Oh, to be a vessel holding hot liquid;*

*Known to sooth a weary soul.  
A greater cause many beings,  
Will never rightly know.*



#### **AUTHOR'S NOTE:**

*My fiancé and I recently took a long weekend to attend a concert in St. Louis, Missouri. We spent the remaining part of the weekend exploring area wineries and local towns all decked out for fall. One such town, Augusta, MO, piqued my interest as it was a small town, but had so much character and history, it felt a bit like stepping back in time. As an avid shopper, my eyes honed in on an antique store in the center of the adorable little town. While my fiancé further explored the town, I popped into the flea market for a quick look.*

*This was one of those shops where the owner felt like a friend, the ambiance felt like a comfortable old-fashioned living room (where everything was for sale), and the items she carried in her store absolutely tickled my nostalgic childhood senses. I love shopping, and in particular, stumbling upon items that remind me of my past. Each of these three items (the thimbles, keys, and teacup, not to mention the National Geographic magazines) reminded me of summers spent with my Grandparents on their small farm in Willard, MO.*

*While some might call me a....cough, cough....hoarder, I prefer to think of myself as a memory keeper of historic treasure. Any item which represents a special piece of my past is sacred to me. While not everyone buys items that remind them of their childhood, most folks do enjoy a good jog of the childhood memory senses, which is why I think antique markets are so popular. Just walking through the aisles, seeing dishes you recall from Thanksgiving dinners at your Grandparent's house, to a children's storybook that their Mom read every night before lovingly tucking them in, to old toys, books, stuffed animals, the list is endless.*

*Anything that jogs the memory and produces a sweet fragrance of days gone by is worthy of gratitude. What the heck am I going to do with old keys, porcelain thimbles, and a fragile tea cup? Who cares! The fact that they make me happy and open up a Pandora's box of sweet memory is reason enough for me to bring them home.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Mandi Maphies DeBoef works at the UMKC School of Pharmacy and as a freelance writer in her spare time. Her greatest passion is being a boy mom to her two sons, William (11) and Waylan (9). Her sons never fail to provide daily entertainment, which inspires many of her writings. She also loves to write about everything from being a single mom and dating after divorce to finding love later in life, the devastation of miscarriage, the loss of a loved one and starting over. Her pieces are lovingly filled with inspiration, encouragement and always a touch of humor.

“Live a life worthy of writing about.”

