



Tidings of Comfort and Joy by Raven

As I sit in my cabin nestled by the woodfire, my heart swells in gratitude for the life I have cultivated for myself. Living in a magical snow globe, away from any commercial distractions of what celebrating the Christmas season is all about. I can't help but reflect on Christmas' past when my choices regarding how I was going to spend my holiday season were much different than now.

This was the week that I felt an enormous weight on my shoulders as my lists of holiday "should do's" began taking hold of me. There was gift buying – ensuring that I came up with the 'perfect' well thought out gift for each person on my growing list, there was baking to do – everyone got their favorite treats as usual, tree decorating – ensuring a different colour and theme from last year, gift sending – to family members living away, groceries to buy for the family feast and ultimately, finding a festive outfit to help sustain the smile of my face that would inevitably create the "perfect Christmas".

Not surprising, this was also the time of year that kicked off the flu season. Sound familiar? It was either I took on the task of nursing family members back to health or pulled a double shift nursing myself along with them. The entire holiday experience did NOT reflect the Christmas' that I dreamed of. What I wanted was the Walton's Christmas or Little House of the Prairie but each year I found it rather disillusioning to say the least. Why is it that I consistently chose to do myself in every December? No wonder Christmas is celebrated one time a year as it takes us that long to either forget or recover in time to do it again next year.

As funny as it sounds, it was my reality and continues to be for so many other women out there, however, be of good cheer ladies, I bring you tidings of comfort and joy. The good news is that you CAN be loving, calm, generous, peaceful, festive and connected to the special people in your life for the holidays this year without the misery, exhaustion, conflict or holiday humbug. It starts with realizing (I mean really getting it) that you can't do everything. You don't need to. Not all at once, not in the next two weeks. Period. Sure, back in the Victorian era, women did it all BUT they were also full-time homemakers who began preparing for Christmas in July. One of the reasons why past Christmas' were never perfect as anticipated, is because we tried to do too much, too perfectly.

The most self-loving and effective thing we can do to change all that is to look at our to do lists and choose only what we love the most about the holidays. This task is really quite easy when you get the hang of it. Consider allowing yourself to sit and enjoy your morning coffee while watching the snow fall, set your alarm 10 minutes earlier if you have to and take in this amazing time for yourself before rushing off to a busy day. Delight in the sounds of Christmas music as you drive to work, make a delicious pot of soup and freeze the extra for other times when you want to spend a weekend afternoon walking in the woods. Invite friends over for a potluck and PJ party. All you have to do is provide the table space and when it's over, your ready to tuck right into bed. Don't lose sight of what's important to you. Choosing things that slow us down, warm our hearts and nurture our relationships brings us to the true meaning and magic of Christmas – did we not learn anything from the Walton's and Little House on the Prairie?