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## FROM MOLLIE & GLENDA

### The wonder of retreats

Winter was in its full glory for our annual New Year's Reading Retreat this year.

Snow was deep on the ground, and temperatures plummeted to well below zero every night, struggling to even reach zero during the days. But the sun shone and the skies were intensely blue, and inside we had fires in the big fireplace and lively book discussions to keep us warm.

And, intrepid women that we were, many of us decided one day to walk from our retreat center, on the edge of the campus of St. John's University, to the museum on campus where the famed hand-created, illuminated St. John's Bible was on display—a distance of a little less than a mile. Bundling ourselves up like little kids going out to play in the snow, we set off.

There are two ways to walk to the campus. I like the path that goes through some woods and along a little lake, but the trail was unbroken, and with snow about a foot deep, it was a slog. So, many of the group decided to walk along the road instead, but a couple of us set off on the path.

About halfway along, just before turning to cross the little lake on a footbridge, we paused to catch our breath. There was a nice flat area of unmarked snow there, and suddenly I wanted to make a snow angel—a fun activity from childhood that I don't remember doing for years, decades, probably.

So I flopped down on my back, swept my arms up and down to make the wings, then managed to get myself back up without destroying the figure. Such fun to feel free in the snow that way. And the image of the angel turned out wonderfully—an archangel, one of the women said.

We went on our way and met up with the others at the

museum. The next day, during free time, I decided to take another walk. I thought I'd head the other direction from the day before, but couldn't decide where. Then I changed my mind, again, and started out for campus. I was going to take the road this time, but at the last minute, I felt drawn back to the path through the woods.

As I neared the spot where my angel was, I was eager to see it again. I really did like what I had so easily created! And there it was, untouched, at the point where the path turns, like a guardian or a guide for the way.

As I admired it, I noticed a tiny, tiny little gold-colored something in the snow, just to the side of the figure. Intrigued, I reached down to see what it was. I grabbed it and pulled up—my keys! House keys, office keys, car keys. The gold was just the very tips of two of them.

I didn't even know I had lost them. I hadn't realized that they had been in my jacket pocket and obviously fell out when I did my angel flop. Since I didn't drive to the retreat, I probably wouldn't have realized they were gone until I got back home. My neighbor has a house key, so I could have gotten in, but then I would have gone crazy trying to find them, trying to remember where I might have put them. It would have been spring before they appeared on the ground next to where my angel had melted away, and then the tall grasses would have hidden them again.

I have never thought much about angels and guardian spirits. But now I wonder about what happened at our snowy retreat: Where did my urge to make a snow angel come from? What drew me to visit her again?

Reading retreats always leave one with much to think about, but this New Year's retreat has given me more to ponder than I expected.—**Mollie Hoben**

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### The importance of a good editor

Many readers have told us they enjoyed reading about our Martha's Vineyard Books Afoot adventures in the last issue. The sense of enchantment and connection that the participants experienced came through, these readers tell us.

Those who read with an editor's eye may also have noticed a number of typos in the article, though they were kind enough not to tell us. Typically, everything in an issue is read by several people, most importantly our topnotch

proofreader and copy editor, Terri Foley. But a number of last-minute complications with the issue meant that Terri didn't check the Martha's Vineyard article. And the result was obvious. A good reminder for us all about the importance of editors.

Speaking of Martha's Vineyard, we're planning to return to the island this fall. We'll also return to Oaxaca, Mexico, in November. Interested? See the ad on page 25.