

Spring, Year Two ...

I will turn their mourning into gladness and I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. Jeremiah 31:13

Everywhere I look the world is coming alive. A wall of green nearly obscures the homes at the back of our property. Two days from now those houses will be invisible. The underbrush, celadon, will be in full leaf as if I alone live here, as if our one acre is a never-ending wood.

Purple plums, delicate, ethereal, dot our landscape. Crab apples bloom dusty pink, line a neighbor's driveway. I hire Efron and Natalio to get our yard up and running. The yard Bob loved so much has been raked and mulched and mowed. Bleeding heart, pachysandra, myrtle, and hosta break through, sprout, flower, show their variable faces. Birds twitter and call.

I've got a spray of lilacs on the living room desk. Today I inhale their fragrance and weep.

Why am I weeping this spring, at the smell of lilacs, at the twitter of birds, at what is so lovely and fresh and new? Why is this spring as poignant and painful and perhaps lonelier even than the first? There is a reality about this spring, about my life as a widow that is undeniable. My lifetime mate, my "funny valentine," my dear and kind and beloved friend is in Heaven. And he's been there a long time it seems.

Now, this season my thoughts of our life together are rarely chronological. I can glance out the window, and he's throwing a perfect spiral to a team of neighbor kids on our front lawn. His arm is impressive. He was noted for that. Or it's just the two of us, empty nesters. It's a spring night, and we walk down our street, crane our necks to see the stars, pick out constellations we know, speculate on those we surmise. We hold hands. Or we're sitting around the kitchen table. It's dinner time. The screen door to the patio is wide open. Finally this evening we can breathe spring air. Winter is past. We play "what was the high point and the low point of your day" with our three kids.

Last night I went to a concert where a grand and beautiful African American woman and a slim and elegant African American man closed the concert with "Come You Disconsolate." Their voices soared, and their beautiful souls cried all the pain and history of the African America experience and the pain and history of all of our experiences on this earth for that matter. And the words fit my spring feeling, my spring lament, my spring longing like a balm. 🌿

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*Come ye disconsolate,
Where'er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts,
Here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.*

—Thomas Moore, 1816