

Valentine's Day, 2020

*I*t's Valentine's Day. Brilliant sunshine creates shadows on my snow-covered deck. The oaks beyond stretch tall against a sky of powder blue. Frigid cold preserves a snowfall that graces each twig and branch. I am playing Ella Fitzgerald's version of "My Funny Valentine" and thinking of Bob. I am thinking of how he was my funny valentine. I am thinking of how his humor, so much a part of his vernacular, his take on life, buoyed my spirits, caused me to laugh in light times, in dark times. He was an original. I could never reconstruct his random comments. I only know they were a gift.

Valentine's Day, almost four years out from his death. For us it was a day of sentimental gifts, cards that say "I love you" in myriad ways all the years of our lives together. Dinners in or dinners out. Fires, walks, embracing (while snow dollops from prairie path trees), weekends away, weekends at home. Sometimes I play music that conjures these memories, and it brings me to tears. I'm like Meryl Streep in "Out of Africa" when she told Robert Redford (her former lover) how she plays a particular record on her victrola, a record they danced to in better days, just to feel the pain but also the glory. They dance together, then, one more time, knowing it will be the last.

Now I play Eva Cassidy's "I Know You By Heart." The lyrics hurt even as they assuage the longing I feel for the person I loved since I was thirteen.

*Midnights in winter
The glowing fire
Lights up your face in orange and gold
I see your sweet smile
Shine through the darkness
Its line is etched in my memory
So I'd know you by heart.*

Though I often pray to be grateful for what I had, a True Love, the Person I knew by heart more than any other, there are times when I long to recapture days of yore. Valentine's Day is one of those times. So much grace has been mine these four years, so much provision. Yet I make no apology for the longing I feel. I understand that all my life here on this earth I will miss my "Funny Valentine" who was funny, yes, but so much more. 🍃