

*The lake is frozen over
The trees are white with snow
And all around reminders of you
Are everywhere I go ...*

Wintersong by Sarah McLachlan

Widow Tales, On Being A Widow At Christmas, year four ...

Christmas has just past. New Year events lie ahead. I'm listening to George Winston's album, *December*, that I must have played a hundred times over the years since it first came out. Music can pull me powerfully into another era, draw out memories once buried, cause me to relive the once upon a time, long agos of my 57 years of loving Bob. Tonight I put the finishing touches on a pot of split pea soup. The ham bone has been simmering all day, and when I come into the house with the groceries it smells delicious. Ham and balsam candle odors take me back to all the times I made soup after Christmas and bought a Christmas candle to accentuate the pine. Times after the traditional Christmas morning brunch with honey-baked ham a prerequisite, as are cheese stratas, coffee cakes, florentine potatoes, fresh squeezed orange juice, coffee. Rich food beyond all measure.

So I slice remaining ham off the bone, chop an onion, add some chicken stock, the dried peas, a potato and some carrots, and season to taste. I play another CD on my under-the-counter radio/stereo. I'm behind electronically, no Alexa for me, just the pile of Christmas CDs that I keep in a kitchen cupboard near the player. I love this instrument, a gift many years ago from our kids, one that works perfectly as I work.

I feel strangely let down tonight—sad. Yes, it is good to have some space after so many dazzling activities, to wind down, to do simple things without the obligation of deadlines. But something is missing. Some ONE is missing. These are the days between Christmas and New Year's Eve: when we hunker down and have a daily wood-burning fire, when I play the carols in my old carol books and sing as I play, when Bob sits in the wingback chair, doing a crossword, poking the fire as needed, often singing along with me. If there's snow, I hear the shovel scrape the sidewalk and see him come in red-cheeked, puffing, hearty. The ache I feel is elemental. And I know, at times, it ever shall be until Heaven's shores.

Now I listen some more to *Wintersong* by Sarah McLachlan.

*And this is how I see you
In the snow on Christmas morning
Love and happiness surround you
As you throw your arms up to the sky
I keep this moment by and by
Oh I miss you now my love ...*

