

Winter



Reflections

Winter Memories

By Jeanne Shaffer

It is strangely reassuring—this suggestion that the pain of that empty space will always be with us. Because while we do want to feel better, we do not want, ever to forget.

Martha Whitmore Hickman

Every winter our family built a large skating rink across the entire backyard. It was a very elaborate skating rink complete with wooden edge boards and hockey nets. The project involved every member of our family—stomping down and smoothing out the snow, laying the large plastic pieces for the base, setting up and supporting the wooden edge boards and then flooding the plastic with water. Once we had a good base of ice, we had to continually shovel the new snow off and flood the rink with more water every evening. We were all pretty enthusiastic in the beginning as we anticipated the hours we would spend skating together. But over time, only one remained faithful—my father. Late at night, after we had all gone to bed, he would put on his long winter coat and tall rubber boots to go out and flood the rink for us. I love this memory of my father. It is one of many that I choose from when I spend time reminiscing about him since his death in September 2003. I can almost hear the metal buckles clanging on his boots.

Memories are powerful. They evoke a wide range of feelings within us. Some memories are painful while others bring us comfort and healing. In our grief journey, we gradually move from a relationship of presence with the one we have lost to a relationship of memory. This process takes time as we work to fully absorb the impact of our loss. Sharing memories is an important part of this healing process. Marta Felber writes in her book, *Grief Expressed*, “These pilgrimages are so painful, but necessary. I trust myself that in each place I will know what I need to do. I will allow plenty of time to recall, to feel, to grieve, and then to let go. In letting go of the past, I make room for the future.”

Not all memories are pleasant or easy to remember. As we move through our grief, we find ourselves sorting through both pleasant and painful memories. My father was a very private man who had difficulty expressing his emotions. For my father, love was an action, not a word. Only in the later years of my life did I begin to hear the words, “I love you.” And yet I have memories that are filled with his expressions of love for me. Watching him from the upstairs window as he flooded the skating rink each night is a powerful statement of his love for me.

As you move through your grief journey, allow the memories that bring you comfort to help heal your pain. While sorting through the painful memories of the past, choose to hold onto certain feelings and let others go. Learn to put the good memories to good use and the bad memories to rest.

Cooking for One

By Jeanne Shaffer



People who are suddenly faced with eating alone may skip meals, pay little attention to what or how much they eat, substitute snacking for good balanced meals, eat out or turn to only frozen meals to get by. Skipping meals deprives your body of energy and can make you feel tired. While snacks are a great way to save time and get some nutrition, you may not be getting enough nutrients to keep you healthy.

Cooking for one begins with shopping for one. Make a shopping list based on your menus. Most recipes can be successfully halved or quartered. To halve 3 eggs, use 2 and decrease the liquid by 2 to 3 tablespoons. Some recipes may need more than half of certain seasonings. A halved recipe will generally cook faster. Check for doneness after 3/4 of the suggested time. The microwave lends itself well to

cooking small amounts of food quickly and easily.

Buy fruits and vegetables by the piece, not by the package. Choose fruit in various stages of ripeness. If meats are only available in packages of 4 or 6, ask the meat cutter to have only two re-wrapped for you. When a certain cut of meat is on sale, buy a large quantity to cook your favorite recipe. Store individual servings in freezer bags for instant meals. You cook once but eat many times.

Consider inviting neighbors, co-workers or friends for dinner once a week. Look around for someone in your same situation and take turns treating one another to a home-cooked meal.

Sometimes eating alone is a welcome time of privacy and quiet. Make your mealtime more enjoyable with a colorful place setting, floral centerpiece and your favorite music. Pamper yourself as you would a guest—you deserve it!

Proven Stress Reducers

- ❖ Do one thing at a time
- ❖ Learn to say no more often
- ❖ Don't rely on your memory—write it down
- ❖ Whenever possible, do it now!
- ❖ Delegate jobs—ask for help
- ❖ Keep a journal—at the end of each day write about the moments you experienced
- ❖ Get up fifteen minutes earlier
- ❖ Allow extra time
- ❖ Relax your standards
- ❖ Simplify, simplify, simplify
- ❖ Make a list of goals that you know you can accomplish

It's winter inside,
and I don't know if
spring will ever come.

But every once in a while
I think I see a sprig of green
pushing up through the frozen ground.

Maybe, just maybe
spring will come.

Be with me, God
while I watch for spring.
Be with me, God,
when the icy winds blow.
Be with me, God,
when I slip and fall.

Help me to endure the winter.
Help me to wait for spring.
Help me to give hope a chance.
Help me to live again.

Kenneth C. Haugk



A Book Review

By Doris TenElshof

Finding Your Way—After Your Spouse Dies by Marta Felber is filled with helpful suggestions for traveling through a time of loss and grief. Although many of the suggestions in this book are similar to those covered in others, there are some ideas that stand out as being especially helpful.

Ms. Felber begins by suggesting that you create a “*comfort place*” for yourself—a special place where you give yourself permission to remember and cry. Because tears can be helpful during the grieving process, she even suggests that you try to draw out those tears by looking at pictures or reading old cards. Releasing the tears during these times alone in your “*comfort place*” may help you to feel more in control when you are in public.

Grief often includes denial. You do not want to believe that the life of your loved one is really over, that he or she is really gone. It is important to work through this phase by recognizing your denial. Perhaps writing may help. Start a journal or write a letter to your deceased spouse honestly expressing your feelings of pain.

Vow to start each new day on a positive note. Be optimistic! Look for the joy. Remember that not all decisions need to be made immediately. Give yourself time to grieve during the early months following a death; that is not the time to think about making changes in your life.

You should feel free to make the home yours. As you begin with small changes, you will discover that things do not have to stay exactly the same. You should feel free to personalize your space and have those changes bring you a sense of joy. You should also attempt to find things to do that you enjoy doing in your “alone” times, such as reading, gardening, writing, walking or painting.

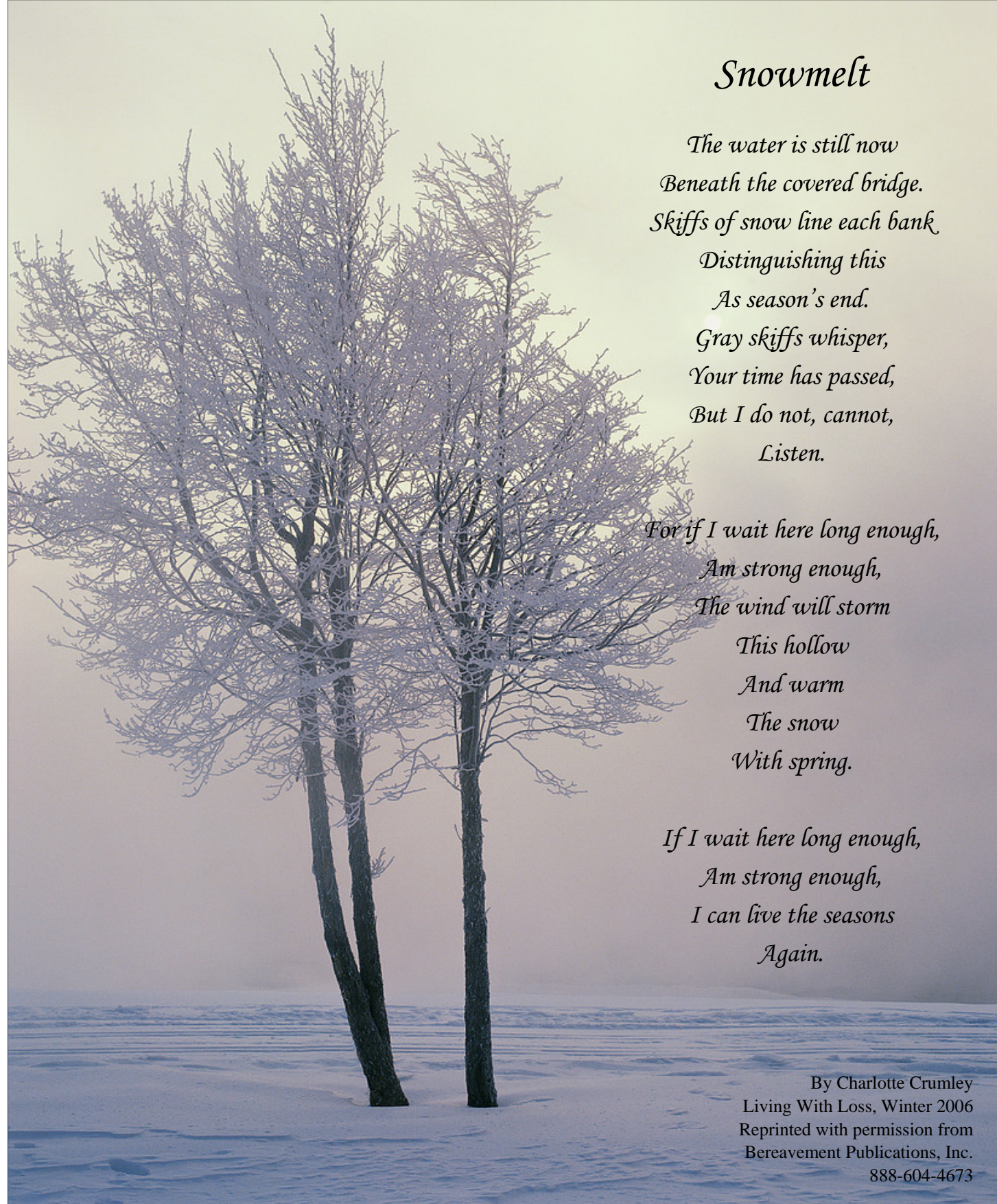
Although it is important to remember, it is also important not to live in memory. Do not waste a single day given to you; allow yourself to live in the present. It is important to remember that it is impossible to create happiness alone. Stay involved, volunteer, help others, look for humor and laugh. Embrace the time you begin to feel normal again, the times you feel joy.

*Memory is a way of holding onto
the things you love, the things you are,
the things you never want to lose.*

The Wonder Years

Memory is a child walking along a seashore.
You never can tell what a small pebble it will pick up
and store away among its treasured things.

Pierce Harris, *Atlanta Journal*



Snowmelt

*The water is still now
Beneath the covered bridge.
Skiffs of snow line each bank
Distinguishing this
As season's end.
Gray skiffs whisper,
Your time has passed,
But I do not, cannot,
Listen.*

*For if I wait here long enough,
Am strong enough,
The wind will storm
This hollow
And warm
The snow
With spring.*

*If I wait here long enough,
Am strong enough,
I can live the seasons
Again.*

By Charlotte Crumley
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