

A season of loss and love

I used to love autumn, and I still do. But when the leaves begin to change, and the evenings and mornings are dimmer, there are moments when the weight of the season hits me.

Even with all the beauty and life and celebration of this time of year, autumn is also a season of loss—especially in my family.

It was Halloween five years ago when my sister and brother-in-law's baby boy, Georgie, passed away in utero. This is his season, the season my sister delivered him and I had the chance to hold him, the season when I forced smiles for the children for a night of trick-or-treating, the season when we said goodbye to a tiny little boy under a tree full of bright yellow leaves at the cemetery.

And it was a year ago today when my mother called to tell me that my brother-in-law Eric had died. That sudden tragedy, unexpected and unbelievable, has left its mark on this time of year.

Over the past few weeks, as school has started and fall has arrived, I have been thinking of Eric. I haven't been thinking of him on purpose. I haven't had to. Memories of him slip easily into my days, at both expected and unexpected moments. There are the good memories, the wonderful ones. I remember his amazing sense of humor, how dearly he loved his children and mine, how he would spontaneously break into song, how much I always enjoyed our conversations. So often my husband and I will say, "Remember how Eric would say..." and we do. He is with us. Always.

But I also have so many memories of the realization of the loss, of worry for my sister and her children, of feeling helpless and not able to do or say or be all I wanted to be for all those around me who were grieving. I keep finding myself back in the moment when my mother told me Eric had died, and then in the endless series of moments where I broke the news to the people I love...the people Eric loves. I cannot believe a year has passed since Eric's death, just as it's impossible that we said goodbye to Georgie five years ago.

Anniversaries are extraordinary. They come, framed by events and a season that evokes memories. But we are changed. We cannot experience that day the same way. We carry the past, the beauty and the burden, into the present. So here we are.

Loss is part of life. I try to teach our children that it's all right to mourn, but it's important to believe and hope that we will see those we love again. I want them to know that death is not the end. I believe that myself, with absolute conviction.

But even as I know and believe and assure our children of the certainty of eternal life, I can still be sad. So that's where I am. And I suspect that's where I will be every autumn—in some way.

Autumn is full. It's full of color and light coming through the leaves. And it's full of the darkening days, the leaves dropping to the ground, the memories that flutter past on a breeze.

I'm grateful for the beauty and richness of this season. Today I am leaning into the sorrow, but I'm holding onto the belief that even in the darker moments, there is always room for joy.

Joy and Sorrow and remembering a much-loved brother-in-law

Lesson in Love

"Missing Baby Georgie"

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