

## When The Music Comes

Marcie Pierson

In December I expect to hear *Nutcracker* most anywhere—mainstream favorites like *Waltz of the Flowers* or the *Arabian*. But, on this Christmas Eve, it was Drosselmeyer's music. I saw my brother again, playing the role of the magical visitor who danced with Clara, filled the air with sparkling confetti, made trees grow into giants, had children believe that snow was falling. As if he had orchestrated it himself, this was the music he meant for me to hear—the reassurance I needed that very moment.

*You did the right thing, Sis.*

It wasn't the only time I tuned to FM radio, the classical station, and there he was, encrypting messages in the music. The day I drove away with his ashes, I thought of the game we played as kids. Who can guess the composer's name first? He always won. Now, the Colorado countryside hinted at Copland. *The Red Pony*, the American frontier, and a ballet called *Crazy Quilt*. The open plains were his stage, the snow-capped Rockies, his backdrop. I saw him dancing—aloft—pain free—sober.

*Remember me this way.*

Last October, on the third anniversary, he transcended the airwaves with another piece of music I'd recognize. It was Dvořák this time — the *Serenade for Strings*. Suddenly I was seventeen again, dancing with him, and entrusting his tall strength to lift and carry me. So proud I was of him, and hurt that he would prefer any other partner than his little sister back then. Yet, he takes long strides beside me now—plays the music game. He makes his presence known, and surprises me with a quiet and welcome kind of narcissism . . . when the music comes.