Feisty love

Maria Smith

We've suffered a robbery: the most vile, cowardly steal. Silently, invisibly, impalpably, the thief fled our lives leaving behind a trail of destruction, deprivation, desperation and dislocations, indifferent to all sufferings, unmoved by our sorrow. He was identified as Alzheimer’s, but the stolen property was not returned, the damage never repaired. This thief lifted Lonnie’s memory and cognition out of his life. An insidious dismantling of his skills followed. Out went most of his meaningful speech. His coordination faltered, balance wavered. Strange paranoias surfaced. The ability to make choices a thing of the past. Cause and effect became unhinged.

And so it was that all of our lives suffered a 9/11 type of event. For him, a life’s – his life – worth of memories crumbled and pulverised on impact with Alzheimer’s. For us, the family, the reality of our daily lives became one of fragmented relationships, rare and hurried get-togethers. Pleasures were lost
through missed pivotal events
in the lives of the children
and the grandchildren.
Friendships ceased to grow,
starved as they were
of shared experiences.

Ten years on,
Lonnie sits in his chair
each and every day,
telling me nothing of the world he inhabits.
I, myself, feel bereft
of affection,
attention and companionship.
I look back and see
years of toiling
without feedback;
the here and now
full of soliloquies,
not of the Shakespearean kind:
there are no audiences, no applause.
The soul feels fractured:
tiredness and anxiety are constant companions.
Only my spirit bounces against the hard rock of despair
and rises,
each morning,
to face the new day,
determined to make a difference.

I’d like to grow a memorial garden
where our lives together once stood:
I’d celebrate our good times
with a vibrant bed of red tulips;
lay down all unresolved conflicts
and unanswered questions
on a thick patch
of calming lavender.
All grief
dies here.
Feisty love
the only brave survivor.