

## ***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 paranoid 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.

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