

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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