

The Arts and Psychiatry

ALZHEIMER'S DAY REFLECTIONS

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Raghuram TM is a known Indo-Englian poet with five anthologies to his credit. This is one of his newer poems.

Behind the screen of
your hazy eyes, it seems,
there is another movie playing;
Another parallel story of
your making; your idioms;
and your private language;
We just stand agape
at your undecipherable mumblings;
“What do you like for dinner?”—
Our bland question
and you burst into laughter –
“The dog can’t walk on two wheels.”
“Did you mean the walker?”
“No, the watermelon walks on wheels.”

Flabbergasted at your strange retorts
we encourage you to sit up,
sip your regular fruit juice;
Hard of hearing, partially blind,
It’s only the touch of your wrinkled hands
That links us to your heart and a hoary past—
A six-decade-old dialogue of body language;
I stand before you and you fondly stroke my
shoulder;
“Remember me, Dad?”
Your cloudy eyes scan me, then brighten,
“You’re a nice guy, seen you somewhere!”
And the first teardrop of the day
rolls down my cheek...

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NOTE: Caregiver burden is an oft-discussed issue in the context of mental disorders, more so in the case of mental retardation and dementia. In caring for a parent, sibling, spouse, or close relative with a dementing illness, there are moments of helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, and heartbreak. The faint glimmer of hope and deliverance is somewhat like the light at the end of the tunnel. This poem tries to capture one such moment...

— *The Poet*
