

A Thief in the Night: Poetry as Self-Care

Laurie Blackman

Abstract: I wrote this poem to capture the painful feelings of caring for a family member with Alzheimer's. It expresses both the heartbreak and disappointment associated with the journey, but it also highlights the unexpected joys that arise along the way. For those living with Alzheimer's, I have come to understand how much remains unknown about their innate traits—traits that encourage learning, resilience, and even moments of success. I believe it is important not to place limits on their capabilities, even in the later stages of the disease.

Keywords: disease, Alzheimer's, resilience, poetry

As a gerontologist, educator, social worker, and family caregiver, I was inspired by my experiences with my mother, who has been living with Alzheimer's for the past 15 years, to write this poem. Through this poem, I sought to express the pain, frustration, and disappointment that my family and I have faced during this journey. At the same time, I want to celebrate the successes we've achieved in caregiving, which have been equally significant.

As a caregiver, I have discovered unexpected triumphs in managing this incurable disease. These moments have been emotional, exciting, and surprising, reinforcing my belief in the strengths perspective—a social work approach that demonstrates that individuals possess the inherent capacity to grow and change, even in challenging circumstances (Marsiglia et al., 2021, p. 132). For families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's, this perspective offers opportunities for growth, possibilities for the care recipient, and hope for caregivers like me.

A Thief in the Night

Lying in wait
Months, years, you steal from the unsuspecting
Who remain unknowing
Taking the inconspicuous
Indifferent to caused confusion
Later, more brazen with increased determination

Enacting countless acts of cruelty
Terrorizing families
No mercy
No remorse
Thriving in the fear you exert

Faith as protection
A shield
A weapon
Refusing to be a victim

Voiceless no more
Exposing your identity

Alzheimer's Disease
Criminal!
Thief!

Longing for peace
Oh-oh-oh
Brighter days

References

Marsiglia, F. F., Kulis, S. S., & Lechuga-Peña, S. (2021). *Diversity, oppression, and change: Culturally grounded social work*. Oxford University Press.

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