

Carol Leon

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The Long and the Short of it

He helps her to the bathroom.
A tall lad, long-limbed, loose and flying.
She holds on to his thin arm.
A small, short frame against his lanky one.

Every step is pronounced
almost painstaking.
Slowly, slowly,
they walk side by side
a towering figure, a slight one
to their destination.

She carried him in her arms,
consoling the bawling child
with endearments and kisses.
She held his chubby arm
as both maneuvered steps and drains,
later coming to his defence when adolescent angst
confronted adult supervision.

Years of companionship.
Often quiet but ever-present.
Allowing both to grow in their own ways
which honoured the individual person.

And now, as she totters through her remaining days
watery eyes, clouded and weary,
I catch her gaze as she looks at him,

pure admiration and love
as he assists her to the hall, the bathroom, the garden,
offering her his guiding hand.

Two souls that will remain touched by each other forever.
And that is the long and the short of it.

My Silly Dog

Bloated belly lying in the sun.
A muppy brown-white rag
on a green lawn.
Silly dog!
Picking up garden fleas
on your weary torso.
Age has made you sillier yet!

You come in running,
blindly, looking for me,
missing me as you run
straight to the kitchen.
Juicy morsels,
morsels, where are you?

Where is she?
You live in great abandon.
Never a care for who is there.
Just as long
as you feel loved,
and catch your own fleas,
you are all right,
my silly boy.

You can yet teach me how to live.

When My Life Becomes A Memory

When my life becomes a memory,
and when you think of me, recall my wide smile,
my raucous laugh, the way I tried to be elegant
in my clumsy way,
my need to make special days happy,
my love of travel, fun,
food and music,
books.
How I tried to be useful
which I found easy,
how I tried to be kind
which was not easy,
how I loved each of you
deeply.

Carol Leon is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She received her PhD in travel literature from the Australian National University. Her fields of research are contemporary travel writings and postcolonial literature and theory. Currently, she is working on Malaysian heritage, nationalism and ethnic identities in Malaysian literature in English.