

Caregiver's pantoum

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I just can't put him in a nursing home,
I can't.
I promised:
He made me vow to him.

I can't.
I still remember the good times.
I made a vow to him:
in sickness, in health, for richer, for poorer.

I still remember the good times.
Being newly married, taking care of each other,
in sickness, in health, for richer, for poorer.
Holding hands in the park on warm Sunday afternoons.

Being newly married, taking care of each other.
Then we had kids,
holding their hands in the park on warm Sunday afternoons.
The kids grew up.

Then we had kids;
Having them made our lives complete.
The kids grew up.
It was just the two of us again.

Having them made our lives complete,
but we relished our "empty nest."
It was just the two of us again.
Just like old times.

Initially we relished our "empty nest,"
but now I was the one taking care of him.
Just like old times?
He was constantly repeating the same questions.

But now I was the one taking care of him
wandering outside the house.
He was constantly repeating the same questions.
I'd get frustrated and chide him.

Wandering outside the house;
the police had to bring him home.
I'd get frustrated and chide him
and he'd get sulky and pout petulantly.

Listen to Dr. Acosta read this poem, available exclusively on *Neurology*[®] for the iPad[®].

The police had to bring him home,
a grown man, in his pajamas, wandering in the streets.
He'd get sulky and pout petulantly
every time I had to change his soiled clothes.

A grown man, in his pajamas, wandering the streets.
It's getting so hard to take care of him
every time I have to change his soiled clothes.
I'm not sure how much more of this I can take.

It's getting so hard to take care of him.
Sure, he's redirectable, but when the day comes that he's not ...?
I'm not sure how much more of this I can take.
He still wants to hold my hand when we go out for long walks.

Sure, he's redirectable, but when the day comes that he's not ...?
He's still the same, sweet man I married so many years ago.
He still wants to hold my hand when we go out for long walks,
security ceding to sentiment.

He's still the same, sweet man I married so many years ago,
but now he's also changed.
Security supersedes sentiment:
I think he needs to be placed somewhere.

But now he's also changed.
I feel terrible that I can't care for him at home and that
I think he needs to be placed somewhere.
But then he looks at me with those big eyes and I see a flicker of recognition.

I feel terrible that I can't care for him at home and that
I told him I'd never put him in a home.
But then he looks at me with those big eyes and I see a flicker of recognition,
then that thought passes.

I told him I'd never put him in a home.
If he could understand what's going on now, he'd understand the circumstances, I think.
Then that thought passes.
What do I do?

If he could understand what's going on now, he'd understand the circumstances, I think.
I promised.
What do I do?
I just can't put him in a nursing home.

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