

I AM LOSING MY WIFE

By

Ira Asherman

Slowly but surely, I am losing the person I married. Every day my wife moves a little further away into her own private world, a world I can rarely enter or even understand. I am losing her. She screams at me, curses me, scratches me, punches and generally indicates that I am just a swift pain in the ass and not worth having around. Fifteen minutes later she gives me a big hug and tells me how much she loves me. Those latter moments have become fewer and fewer. Life has become an emotional roller coaster. Changing every day. I can hardly imagine what it is for my wife. She is barely able to articulate what she feels although her behavior tells me how scared and frightened she must be and I cannot comfort her. I cannot make the pain go away. To be fully transparent, the early years were not nearly as difficult. Yes, she asked the same question multiple times and forgot where we were going and whose home we just left. However, we managed to attend the theatre, the ballet, concerts and dine out with friends and continue working and traveling. Over the years, however, these activities have lessened, and I have watched Alzheimer's slowly imprison the women I married. Physically, she is still there and

at times she looks as beautiful as ever. But she is not the same and never will be. When she asks for her mother and calls me Daddy I cringe. We still go out for walks, shopping, lunch, and occasionally to a show or a concert and she still attends a variety of programs designed for those with dementia and their caregivers. But even these very activities can at times prove to be a challenge as we are never sure how she will react or behave. She has been known to resist leaving an activity or a taxi but rather to sit and wait. Waiting for what we are not quite sure. Be it day or night, sleep has now become her favorite activity.

Alzheimer's is a terrible disease. It takes people in small bites. You are watching someone you love slowly disappear before your eyes. For every family the road is different but one thing is a constant and that is the inexorable destination. Regardless of the road you travel, it will be filled with pain and discomfort. You will sit home at night and realize that you are alone, that you have no one with whom to discuss today's political events or last night's show or concert. That you are left paying the bills, preparing dinner or ordering in, doing the dishes and cleaning the apartment.

That person you love so dearly is slowly vanishing before your eyes and there is not much you can do about it. You can slow down the progression but it will eventually catch and pass you and leave you wondering what just happened and why.