

THE COUPLE

Second Place Poetry 2009

Walking into the fluorescent lit room
I saw her
A mass hiding under a pile of blankets
Then him,
Sitting in a chair by her bedside.

“Judith,” I said, “Judith?”
Giving the pile a gentle shake
Only a whimper,
As she buried herself down further
Out of sight,
Out of mind.
Sixty-one years old
And as if a child.

Looking helplessly up at her husband,
Who apologized, shaking his head sadly,
“She’s been like this for so long now...”

I went on with the interview,
With him, not her.
Occasionally, she looked at me
From underneath the blankets,
With wild eyes.
Answering questions every now and then,
Before diving back underneath her blankets,
Into the safety of her refuge once again.

I listened closely to him,
“Yes, we’ve been married 34 years...”
“Yes, I take care of her...”
Smiling,
“Yes, three daughters, all grown...”

And I couldn’t help wondering
About their wedding day...
What she beautiful?
Did she hold herself with grace,
Throw her head back laughing
When he whispered something
In her ear as they danced?
Did she light up as their eyes met?
What did those eyes hold before

Fear and anxiety settled in?

I gave him a small, wistful smile,
Wrapped up with my well-rehearsed cordialities
And turned to walk out the door,
Trying hard to shake off
The heaviness of this world.

Meera Ramachandran, MD
111 Colchester Ave.,
Burlington, VT 05404
Email: Meera.Ramachandran@vtmednet.org