

A DAUGHTER'S LOVE  
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accident; Sjogren's Syndrome, causing chronic dehydration; lupus; and fibromyalgia.

And then there was the stress of the job. The patients she dealt with on a daily basis were a tough crowd. Murderers and sex crime assailants were the norm in the halls of the hospital.

"Every case you'd read about in the newspaper, they are there."

Her work days left her fatigued, in constant pain, mentally and emotionally exhausted, virtually housebound and unemployable. Before leaving work permanently in May 2011, she was experiencing short-term memory loss; she couldn't remember her co-workers names while on the job. And she became increasingly worried she would make mistakes at work with the patients' medications, something that still weighs heavy on her mind.

But what got Victoria most concerned was the day she could not remember her baby granddaughter's name.

"Horrible," the grandmother of 2-year-old Emma says, tears dribbling down her rosy cheeks beneath her wire-rimmed glasses.

Not long after, daughter Michelle decided she couldn't leave Emma with Grammy alone anymore. A new low.

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Michelle doesn't take her eyes off her mother as her mom recalls her journey from robust worker and all-American dream seeker, who owned her own home and new automobile, to her near-homelessness and a likely destitute existence. Her gaze seems a combination of pure love and utter worry; of unconditional respect for her mom and of virtual panic. Only the mischievous behavior of young Emma wanting to explore the refrigerator for snacks breaks her trance-like attention to her mother's words.

Michelle, an aspiring chef, farmer, and college student in Eugene, struggles to make ends meet herself. She lives in a small but immaculate and sunny downtown Eugene bungalow with another single mom. This summer she'll be a nanny for her roommate's child, affording her time with Emma while making some needed money. Her home is clean and bright. Her toddler cheerfully

plays in every corner, keeping her young mom on her toes. But Michelle's own mother's struggles keep her distracted and worried most of the time.

Michelle has given her mom money and lends moral support the best she can. She lived with her mom in the foreclosed home Victoria owns in Salem, but had to move when it appeared that they would be asked to leave with very short notice. After all, she had to make her own child's well-being a priority. So she moved on. Or so she has tried.

And Michelle holds vigil, trying her best to help Victoria make sense of a complex health and social service system that seems unnavigable. They wait for an insurance lottery-win so Victoria can gain access to Oregon Health Plan coverage. Without dependent children it isn't easy and won't come quickly. She won once but the offer was quickly retracted since Victoria was employed and insured just six months earlier. She wasn't bad off enough. She isn't a problem gambler. She isn't an addict. Either one of those diagnoses would bring help more quickly.

Michelle keeps track of her mom's nutrition, maintained on the \$200 a month Victoria receives in food stamps, encouraging her consumption of fruits and vegetables. And she is moving her mom's possessions into her own storage unit, preparing for Victoria's inevitable eviction from the home where there hasn't been heat or hot water for months. The real estate agent pays to keep the cold water on.

She grieves over the possibility that her mom will end up in a special parking program where homeless folks are allowed to park a travel trailer in a city parking lot. It's dangerous, Michelle says. And that is saying nothing about likely mold in the 1960's trailer that may be offered to her mom by another family member for the program. All of her mom's health problems could easily be complicated by the spores. Things could get worse.

Michelle grimaces.

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