

A DAUGHTER'S LOVE
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HOLDING ON

Victoria stands at the edge where she can barely see her former productive and self-sustaining life. Sometimes, admittedly, she wants to give up. But she cannot.

"If not for those two..." Victoria tearfully says, pointing to her daughter sitting cross-legged on a colorful quilt covering a living room futon and caressing granddaughter Emma's back.

Michelle does not blink; her large dark eyes mist over.

Victoria has to accept help for the first time in her life, Michelle says. And she'll live alone for the first time ever, sans her four-legged companions. Where they'll all rest their heads at night is the question.

Victoria decided early on in childhood that trusting adults could be risky and her beloved dogs were a safer bet. And despite decades passing, Victoria's childhood assumptions are apparently as strong as ever. Her only companionship, she says, are Sugar Bear and Zoe.

Sadly, her little dogs are actually adding to Victoria's problems.

Some people aren't willing to help her because of the dogs. They think the dogs should be unloaded, Victoria says. And the thought of that seems to trump all of the other challenges this mother faces.

"You'd have to understand where I come from," she says. "Dogs have always been there for me when I had nobody."

Giving them up isn't a consideration. Period.

"I'm not that kind of person," Victoria says. "I made a commitment to them!"

More tears.

But while the dogs may be standing between help and no assistance at all, Victoria reveals that their lives just may have another role that, at the doorstep of homelessness and the indignity that can bring to a person, may have immeasurable value: purpose.

"They are the only reason — some days — to get out of bed."

To contact Michelle and Victoria: onephoenixfire@yahoo.com



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